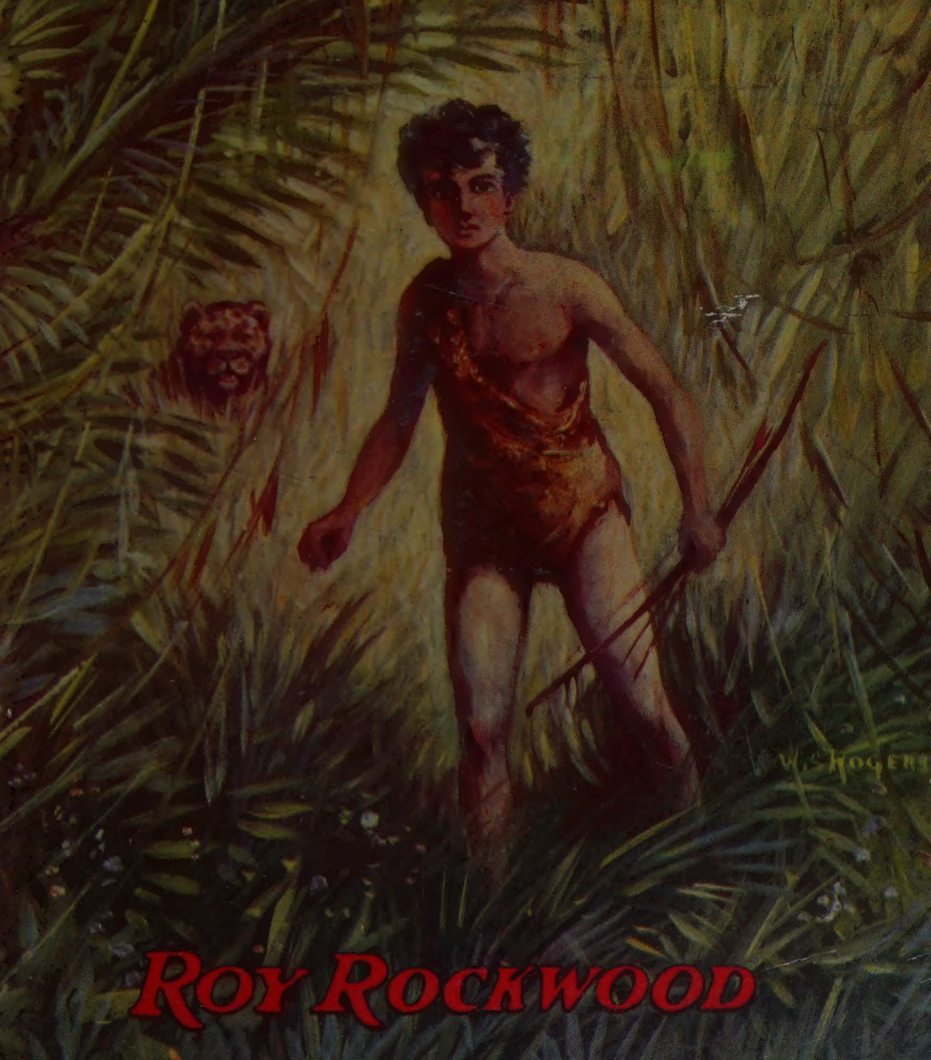


# **BOMBA**

## **THE JUNGLE BOY**

at the

## **GIANT CATARACT**



**Roy Rockwood**

## THE BOMBA BOOKS

By ROY ROCKWOOD

*Bomba lived far back in the jungles of the Amazon with a half-demented naturalist who told the lad nothing of his past. The jungle boy was a lover of birds, and hunted animals with a bow and arrow and his trusty machete. He had a primitive education in some things, and his daring adventures will be followed with breathless interest by thousands.*

### THE TITLES IN THIS SERIES ARE:

1. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY
2. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AT THE MOVING MOUNTAIN
3. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AT GIANT CATARACT
4. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY ON JAGUAR ISLAND
5. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY IN THE ABANDONED CITY
6. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY ON TERROR TRAIL
7. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY IN THE SWAMP OF DEATH
8. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AMONG THE SLAVES
9. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY ON THE UNDERGROUND RIVER
10. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AND THE LOST EXPLORERS
11. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY IN A STRANGE LAND
12. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AMONG THE PYGMIES
13. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AND THE CANNIBALS
14. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AND THE PAINTED HUNTERS
15. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AND THE RIVER DEMONS
16. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AND THE HOSTILE CHIEFTAIN
17. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY TRAPPED BY THE CYCLONE

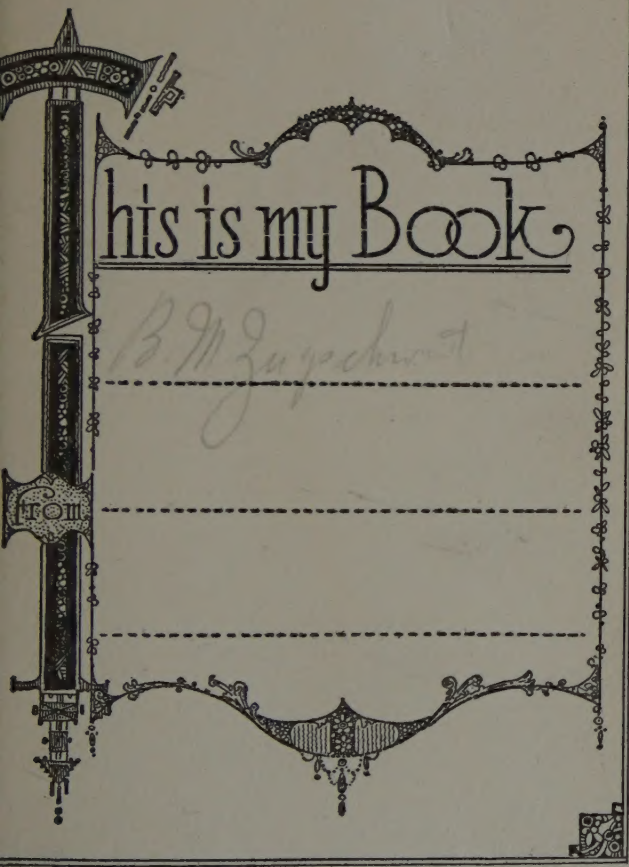
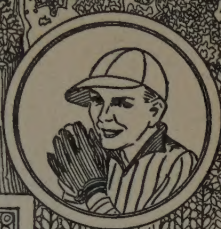
CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY

PUBLISHERS :: :: NEW YORK

[See Inner Side of This Wrapper]















THE WATER KEPT RISING HIGHER AND HIGHER.  
*Romba at the Giant Cataract.*

**BOMBA**  
**THE JUNGLE BOY**  
**AT THE GIANT**  
**CATARACT**

OR

**Chief Nascanora and His Captives**

BY

**ROY ROCKWOOD**

AUTHOR OF "BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY," "LOST ON  
THE MOON," "THROUGH SPACE TO MARS," ETC.

*ILLUSTRATED*

NEW YORK  
CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS



# **BOOKS FOR BOYS**

*By* **ROY ROCKWOOD**

## **THE BOMBA BOOKS**

12mo.      Cloth.      Illustrated.

BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY  
BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AT THE MOVING  
MOUNTAIN  
BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AT THE GIANT  
CATARACT

## **GREAT MARVEL SERIES**

THROUGH THE AIR TO THE NORTH POLE  
UNDER THE OCEAN TO THE SOUTH POLE  
FIVE THOUSAND MILES UNDERGROUND  
THROUGH SPACE TO MARS  
LOST ON THE MOON  
ON A TORN-AWAY WORLD  
THE CITY BEYOND THE CLOUDS

## **SPEEDWELL BOYS SERIES**

THE SPEEDWELL BOYS ON MOTOR CYCLES  
THE SPEEDWELL BOYS AND THEIR RACING  
AUTO  
THE SPEEDWELL BOYS AND THEIR POWER  
LAUNCH  
THE SPEEDWELL BOYS IN A SUBMARINE  
THE SPEEDWELL BOYS AND THEIR ICE  
RACER

## **DAVE DASHAWAY SERIES**

DAVE DASHAWAY, THE YOUNG AVIATOR  
DAVE DASHAWAY AND HIS HYDROPLANE  
DAVE DASHAWAY AND HIS GIANT AIRSHIP  
DAVE DASHAWAY AROUND THE WORLD  
DAVE DASHAWAY, AIR CHAMPION

**CUPPLES & LEON CO.,**      Publishers, New York

Copyright, 1926, by  
CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY

BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AT THE GIANT  
CATARACT

Printed in U. S. A.

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	THE SUDDEN ATTACK . . . . .	1
II	AT GRIPS WITH DEATH . . . . .	9
III	IN THE NICK OF TIME . . . . .	19
IV	A TERRIFIC STRUGGLE . . . . .	26
V	TERRIBLE JAWS . . . . .	35
VI	PURSUED BY AN ALLIGATOR . . . . .	42
VII	CARRIED INTO CAPTIVITY . . . . .	53
VIII	THE MAN WITH THE SPLIT NOSE . . . . .	62
IX	THE SAVAGE RAIDERS . . . . .	69
X	IN DEADLY PERIL . . . . .	80
XI	FEROCIOUS FOES . . . . .	86
XII	THE JAGUARS ATTACK . . . . .	95
XIII	THE MAD MONKEY . . . . .	102
XIV	BESET BY ENEMIES . . . . .	109
XV	LYING IN AMBUSH . . . . .	116
XVI	THE ISLAND OF SNAKES . . . . .	125
XVII	AMID WRITHING SERPENTS . . . . .	136
XVIII	THE MYSTERY DEEPENS . . . . .	146

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
XIX	A STARTLING INTERRUPTION . . .	153
XX	IN THE HANDS OF THE HEADHUNTERS	161
XXI	THE GIANT CATARACT . . . . .	167
XXII	RUSPAK GLOATS . . . . .	173
XXIII	A MAD STAMPEDE . . . . .	180
XXIV	IN THE SWIRL OF THE RAPIDS . . .	186
XXV	THE RESCUE OF SOBRININI . . . .	192



# BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AT THE GIANT CATARACT

## CHAPTER I

### THE SUDDEN ATTACK

BOMBA made his way as silently as a panther through the jungle.

For that jungle abounded in enemies, as the boy had had occasion to know. At any moment a boa constrictor might drop like a flash from a tree above and seek to enfold him in its crushing coils. A turn of the trail might bring him face to face with a crouching jaguar. Or a cooanaradi, deadliest of all venomous snakes, might launch itself from the underbrush and inject its poison into his veins.

There were human foes, too, against whom Bomba had to be on his guard. With the natives who dwelt in that part of the jungle he was on comparatively friendly terms, though he never mingled with them on a footing of intimacy.

But from time to time the dreaded headhunters from the faraway region of the Giant Cataract

## 2 BOMBA AT THE GIANT CATARACT

invaded this district in search of the hideous trophies which their name implied wherewith to adorn their wigwams.

Their coming was a signal for the native inhabitants to flee, carrying along with them their children and scanty household belongings. The head-hunters were cruel and ruthless, and death and destruction followed in their wake.

Bomba had seen signs of them that very morning, and he had no desire for a closer acquaintance. On two previous occasions, he and Casson, the aged naturalist with whom he lived, had been sought out by these dreaded savages and had narrowly escaped with their lives. A third time they might not be so fortunate.

"And as I have only one head, I am exceedingly anxious to keep it on my shoulders," the boy had told Casson.

So it was with extreme caution that Bomba threaded his way through the jungle, his eyes darting from right to left, plumbing the recesses of every thicket, piercing the foliage of every tree. With him eternal vigilance was the price, not only of liberty, but of life itself.

There was a sudden rustling in the leaves of a giant dolado tree. Bomba halted instantly, drew an arrow from his belt and fitted it to the string of his bow.

But his tense attitude relaxed as the leaves were

thrust aside and the grinning, friendly face of a monkey framed itself in the opening.

"Doto!" exclaimed Bomba, in accents of relief and pleasure, as he waved his hand to the newcomer.

Welcome was in the tone and gesture, and the monkey dropped from branch to branch, finally landing lightly on the ground. Its eyes gleamed with affection as Bomba caressed its head.

The boy—for he was no more than that, being fourteen years old at the most—presented a striking picture as he stood there with a ray of sunlight falling athwart his face. He was taller than the average boy of his age and far more muscular and more sturdily built.

From constant exposure to sun and storm, his face was as bronzed as that of an Indian, but his features betrayed the fact that he was of the white race. His eyes and hair were brown, his nose strong and aquiline, and his firm jaw denoted courage and resolution.

He wore the mendiyeh, or native tunic, and across his breast was slung a puma skin—that of Geluk, the puma, that he had come across and slain when it was trying to kill the friendly parrots, Kiki and Woowoo. His arms and legs were bare, and showed the powerful muscles rippling under the brown skin at every movement. On his feet were home-made sandals.



#### 4 BOMBA AT THE GIANT CATARACT

In his belt he carried a machete, a two-edged knife fully a foot in length and ground to an almost razor-like sharpness. A pouch at his waist held his arrows and a five-chambered revolver, the only firearm he had ever owned, the gift of two white men whose camp he had saved from a night attack by jaguars.

"So Doto is glad to see Bomba back!" said the boy as he fondled the animal's furry head. "And Bomba is glad to meet Doto again. Bomba has been away for many days and has seen many things. He has met men whose hearts are black. He has seen mountains break apart and fire come from the top. Snakes and jaguars have tried to kill him."

The monkey uttered sounds that would have been unintelligible to many, but that Bomba knew were meant to express sympathy. The boy had an almost uncanny power over animals, and had many friends among the less savage denizens of the jungle, such as the monkeys and parrots. He talked to them and they chattered back at him, and they had arrived at a point where they could understand each other in simple things. Tone and gesture helped to interpret the words and sounds, and each knew intuitively whether the other were sad or glad and they shared emotions in common.

"Bomba's heart is heavy," the lad went on, "for

he has not done what he wanted to do. He went to see Jojasta, the medicine man. He thought the man could tell him about his father and mother. But Jojasta was killed before he could tell Bomba what Bomba wanted to know. He told Bomba something, but not enough."

The lad was speaking more to relieve his own sore heart than anything else, but Doto seemed to understand, and put his hairy paw consolingly on the boy's arm.

"And now before many moons Bomba must go away again," the lad resumed, "for Jojasta told Bomba that he must go to Sobrinini of the Pilati tribe, beyond the Giant Cataract, and that she could tell him about his father and mother. It is a long way off, and there are many dangers in the way. Bomba may never come back, may never see Doto again."

The monkey uttered a wail and snuggled closer to Bomba as though in fear of immediate parting. The boy patted the animal's head affectionately and roused himself from his musings.

"Bomba must go fast," he said. "He is on his way home to Casson. He has been away a long time, and he does not know whether Casson is alive or dead. So Bomba must hurry."

As the lad started on in haste, Doto broke out into excited chatterings and clung to Bomba's arm as though to hold him back.

## 6 BOMBA AT THE GIANT CATARACT

Bomba knew at once that the animal was trying to warn him of threatening danger, and he stopped short in his tracks.

"What is it, Doto?" he asked.

There was another outbreak of sounds that would have been meaningless to anyone else, but which Bomba had no trouble in interpreting correctly.

His face grew grave as he listened.

"I know," he said. "The headhunters, the men with black hearts, are in the jungle. I have seen their signs this morning. I thought that I had got past them. But Doto, from the tops of the trees, can see farther than I can. Where are these men with the bloody hands?"

The monkey pointed in front of them in the very direction Bomba was taking.

The boy hushed the monkey's chattering and stood silent as a statue, listening.

From his long experience in the jungle he had become preternaturally sharp of hearing. He knew all the sounds of the jungle and could interpret them accurately.

But strain his ears as he might, he could detect nothing out of the ordinary. There was the usual hum of insects, the occasional howl of a monkey or shriek of a parrot. But there was nothing to indicate that, besides himself, there was any human being in that part of the jungle.



He glanced at Doto with a look of inquiry, as though to ask if the animal might not be mistaken. But Doto held to his arm with such a frenzied clutch that Bomba decided to trust in the creature's instinct or knowledge—or both.

There was no help for it. In spite of his eagerness to reach Casson, about whose condition he was in a ferment of anxiety, he must make a long circuit to avoid the region in which Doto had indicated that danger lay.

So he changed his course, left the faint trail that he had been following, and swung out in a sweeping semicircle, with every nerve at tension and every sense on the alert. With him went his friend, Doto.

On the route he was now pursuing there was no trail, and Bomba had to hack a way through the underbrush. This involved exhausting work and made his progress slow. But most of all he dreaded it for fear that the noise he necessarily made should attract the attention of lurking foes.

At times, when the brush was very thick, Doto would climb to the lowest branch of a tree and swing from one bough to the other of the interlacing trees, and Bomba, who was almost as agile as the monkey himself, followed his companion's example.

Soon, however, the jungle thinned a little, and

## 8 BOMBA AT THE GIANT CATARACT

they traversed the forest with redoubled speed in order to make up for lost time.

An hour had passed when Doto suddenly grasped the lad's arm and pulled him to the ground. At the same moment, an arrow whizzed over Bomba's head. A second later another arrow followed and buried itself in a tree, where it hung quivering.

Bomba's enemies were upon him!

## CHAPTER II

### AT GRIPS WITH DEATH

LIKE a flash, Bomba acted.

He knew that if he rose he would be offering himself as a target. At least two of his foes were near at hand. There might be more.

Not fifty feet away was a fallen tree, a veritable monarch of the jungle, that he and Doto had made their way over with difficulty. Its branches and foliage spread over a large area.

Turning in that direction, keeping on hands and knees and motioning Doto to follow, Bomba made his way through the intervening thickets with as much speed as possible.

Had his enemies followed at once, Bomba would probably have been discovered and overtaken. But they were wary, and from previous experiences of their fellows knew to what deadly effect Bomba could shoot. So, from their places of concealment, they waited for the target once more to present itself.

And when, a few minutes later, they were reinforced by some of their mates and rushed for-

## 10 BOMBA AT THE GIANT CATARACT

ward in a body to the place where Bomba had last been seen, their expected prey had vanished.

Bomba had utilized those few precious minutes to the utmost. Moving noiselessly and yet rapidly, he had reached the vast mass of branches and ensconced himself in their furthest depths.

His concealment was aided also by the fact that the tree had fallen across a hollow, so that there was a deep hole directly under the trunk. Into this Bomba burrowed, crouching low so that his whole body was hidden even should the branches and foliage be thrust aside by his pursuers.

He had sent Doto off in another direction, as the monkey could be of no help to him if it came to a fight, and might by its chattering betray his hiding place to his enemies.

And now, with his heart beating rapidly but with his courage at the highest pitch, Bomba waited for the coming of his enemies.

He knew that he was in desperate straits and that, if discovered, he would be doomed. But before the end came he would do his utmost to take some of his foes with him.

It was characteristic of the boy that at this supreme moment he thought more of Casson than of himself. He had so often faced death that it had lost most of its terrors.

But Casson! Poor, sick, half-demented Cas-



son! What would become of him if anything should happen to Bomba, who had so long been his reliance and defender?

In that confined space the lad's bow and arrows were of no use to him. But he had his revolver fully loaded, and at such short range it could be trusted to do deadly execution. And as a last resort, if it came to a hand to hand fight, there was his machete, in the use of which he was a master.

Before long he could hear his pursuers beating the bushes in the vicinity, giving utterance to grunts of rage as their search continued fruitless.

He held his breath and waited.

Then he heard another sound, faint at first but gradually becoming more definite, a rustling as of some soft, long body slithering through the brush.

At intervals there was a sound like a rattle, as though the creature had encountered some obstacle that had aroused its irritation and was taking this way of showing it.

Bomba knew that sound, and his heart skipped a beat.

A snake was coming toward him, the deadly jaracara, the South American rattlesnake, the slightest puncture of whose fangs meant death!

What should he do? He could not retreat. If he shot the reptile the noise would bring his

## 12 BOMBA AT THE GIANT CATARACT

human enemies surging down upon him. If he attempted to use his machete, the snake's stroke would be quicker than Bomba's blow, and the creature's fangs would be imbedded in his flesh.

While these thoughts were racing through his mind he saw the loathsome body and the triangular head of the jaracara come into view not ten feet away.

At the same moment the reptile caught sight of Bomba. It stopped short in surprise. Then its eyes snapped with malignant fury. Like a flash it threw its body into a coil and upreared its head to strike.

But in that short moment an inspiration had come to Bomba. He grasped a long stick and prodded its coils. Instantly the snake struck at the stick. Before it could recover, Bomba had pounced upon it and his sinewy hands had closed upon its throat.

Then ensued a terrific struggle, with the death of one or perhaps both of the combatants as the only possible outcome—a struggle all the more terrible for Bomba, because it had to be carried on in silence.

And while he holds that slippery throat with the clutch of desperation, as the snake twists and writhes and tries to bite, it may be well, for the benefit of those who have not read the preceding volumes of this series, to tell who Bomba was and

what had been his adventures up to the time at which this story opens.

From his earliest childhood, as far as his memory went, Bomba had lived with Cody Casson in the jungle. The latter was a naturalist, who had withdrawn from civilization and settled in a little cabin in the remotest part of the Amazonian region. He was moody and abstracted, and often went for days at a time without speaking except in monosyllables.

But he was kind to Bomba, and a warm attachment existed between them. He had started to give the boy the rudiments of an education. But one day, when Casson fired at an anaconda that was darting at Bomba, the gun burst and laid Casson on his back, while the wounded anaconda retreated. Bomba had dragged his injured companion to their cabin and nursed him back to physical health. But Casson's head had been injured by the explosion, and from that time on he was half-demented, though harmless. The lessons ceased abruptly, and Bomba became the provider and protector of the little family of two.

Thrown thus early on his own resources, Bomba had developed into a remarkable physical specimen of boyhood, daring, strong, and versed in all the craft of the jungle. He was surrounded by daily perils, to which a weaker nature would have succumbed. Serpents and wild beasts sought his

life. But against them he matched his own courage and cunning, and had so far survived.

He knew comparatively nothing of the outside world. The jungle filled his whole horizon. But he knew that he was different from the natives of that region. Tugging at his heart was the knowledge that he was white, and he was possessed with a great desire to come in contact with his own people, to learn of their ways and dwell among them.

He knew that he was out of place where he was. The call of the blood was strong within him. He had a great longing to know of his parentage. He had questioned Casson repeatedly on this point, and the old man had striven in vain to tell him. But his memory had failed at the critical moment, and all that he could do was to mention the names "Bartow" and "Laura," which Bomba concluded must refer to his parents.

How Bomba met two white rubber hunters, Gillis and Dorn, and won their gratitude by saving their lives when their camp was attacked at night by jaguars; how he trapped the cooanaradi when it pursued him; how he drove off the vultures when they assailed his friends the monkeys; how the latter came to his aid when the cabin was besieged by the headhunters—these adventures are told in the first book of this series, entitled: "Bomba the Jungle Boy; or, The Old Naturalist's Secret."



Although Casson could not himself remember the facts about Bomba's parentage, he told him that he could learn all he wanted to know from Jojasta, the medicine man of the Moving Mountain. It was a long journey that Bomba had in prospect to reach Jojasta, but the urge to go was so strong that the lad determined to attempt it. After beating off another attack of the head-hunters, Bomba took Casson down the river and delivered him to the care of Pipina, an old squaw for whom he had done many favors, and set out to find Jojasta.

From the very start his journey was beset with dangers from man and beast, flood and earthquake. He was instrumental in delivering from the power of the savages a Mrs. Parkhurst, whom he always referred to in his mind as "the woman with the golden hair." Later he found her son, Frank, and in their joint adventures the boys grew strongly attached to each other, and Frank's stories of the wonders of civilization intensified Bomba's longings to see those things for himself.

How Bomba was swallowed up in an earthquake and hurled into a subterranean cavern that promised to become a living tomb; by what a marvelous combination of nerve and good fortune he reached the open air and sunlight; how he finally found Jojasta after the latter had been fatally hurt by the fall of his temple; the partial

but not sufficient information he received from the dying man regarding his parents; the obstacles he surmounted and the perils he escaped are told in the preceding volume of this series, entitled: "Bomba the Jungle Boy at the Moving Mountain; or, The Mystery of the Caves of Fire."

And now to return to Bomba, as he fights his life-and-death battle with the snake amid the branches and foliage of the fallen tree, not daring to make a sound lest he betray his hiding place to the savages who were hunting for him only a short distance away.

Beneath the scaly skin of the jaracara there was tremendous muscular power, and this was made more available when the reptile secured a purchase by wrapping its long body about the boy's leg.

It squirmed and writhed and twisted, seeking to sink its fangs into the hands that held it. Its jaws, slavered with poison, were never more than a few inches from the boy's flesh. If Bomba's hands should slip from that slimy throat ever so little, his doom would be sealed.

The snake knew this and redoubled its exertions. But Bomba knew it too, and held on with desperation, sinking his powerful fingers deeper and deeper into the reptile's throat.

If he could only hold on a little longer!

For time was on his side. The snake, deprived of breath by that choking grasp, must eventually

succumb. Its only chance lay in the possibility of Bomba's hands slipping or his nerve failing.

But his hands did not slip nor did his nerve fail.

Gradually the struggles of the snake grew weaker. A glaze began to steal over the horrid eyes. The grip of its body about the boy's leg slowly relaxed. Then at last the reptile straightened out and its head hung limp.

Bomba still retained his grip for another minute or two to make assurance doubly sure. Then, when no doubt remained, he threw the reptile to the ground and with one stroke of his machete cut off its head.

Only then did he sink down on the ground, panting and exhausted. The tax had been a tremendous one, not only on his muscles but also on his nerves. He had seldom been brought more closely face to face with death.

But he had conquered, and a tingle of exultation ran through his veins. He cast a glance of disgust at the grinning head of his dead foe, and then turned his attention to the human enemies without.

The struggle had been carried on in such silence that it had not attracted their attention. They were still at some distance, beating the bushes for their prey and uttering exclamations of disappointment and chagrin.

It was too much to hope, however, that sooner or later their attention would not be drawn toward

## 18 BOMBA AT THE GIANT CATARACT

the tree, and Bomba held himself prepared for that eventuality.

He wiped his knife on the foliage and restored it to his belt. Then, with his revolver held ready for action, he crouched low in the hollow and waited.

He could hear the savages coming nearer and nearer. The crackling of the bushes and their guttural conversation became more distinct.

Then the branches of the tree were pushed aside and a ray of light shot through!



## CHAPTER III

### IN THE NICK OF TIME

BOMBA caught a glimpse of half a dozen brawny forms and brutal faces and dropped at once into the hollow so that he was wholly concealed.

A pang stabbed his heart as he noted the number of his enemies. Against so many he could not hope to conquer, if it came to a fight. He might bring down one or two, possibly three, but the others would overcome him.

But his stout heart refused to quail. He had the advantage of position. He could see them outlined against the light more readily than they could discover him in the darkness. He could at least have the satisfaction of selling his life dearly.

Several of the savages crowded in among the foliage, pushing the branches and leaves aside so that light could penetrate.

But the light was dim, though strong enough to show the outline of the giant trunk. To the peering eyes of the savages, it seemed to be lying flat on the ground, and they failed to discern the

## 20 BOMBA AT THE GIANT CATARACT

hollow underneath. As far as they could see there was no one hiding there.

"Not here," grunted one of them, already weary with previous effort in searching the bushes.

Bomba's heart leaped at this indication of giving up the search. But it sank again when a voice that had authority in it said:

"Go in farther. Make sure."

Grumblingly the men obeyed, and Bomba could hear them coming nearer. He tightened his hold on the revolver.

Suddenly there was a shriek of fright, and one of the savages jumped a foot into the air. Then he made a break for the open, shouting:

"Snake! Snake!"

His comrades followed, rushing with frantic, headlong haste into the clearing.

In a flash, Bomba, the jungle boy, comprehended what had happened. The intruder had stepped on the soft, yielding body of the dead serpent and had jumped to the conclusion that it was alive. Naturally, he had not waited to investigate, but had leaped out of the reach of the supposedly deadly fangs.

Now he stood outside the mass of branches and was jabbering excitedly as he told of his narrow escape.

The examination of that particular mass of branches stopped then and there. The men were

reasonably certain, anyway, that their hoped-for victim was not there, and they were perfectly content to leave the snake in undisturbed possession.

Bomba could hear them moving farther and farther off until at last the sound of their footsteps and voices died away in the distance.

He could scarcely believe in his good fortune. He had steeled himself for the conflict that seemed almost inevitable and from which he had not expected to emerge alive.

The coming of the snake, which had filled him with horror, had really proved a blessing. Living, it had tried to kill him. Dead, it had helped to save him.

Bomba lay in the hollow perfectly still for some time, fearing that his enemies might return. But when an hour had passed without any sound to alarm him, he ventured cautiously to creep toward the edge of the pile of branches and look about.

His keen eyes scanned the jungle in every direction, but could discern no trace of his enemies. He had known from the sound of their retreating footsteps that they were not between him and his goal. They had gone in the direction that he had already traversed. That special group, at least, would now be in the rear of him instead of in front.

This conclusion was confirmed when Doto dropped down from a tree, where his sharp eyes

## 22 BOMBA AT THE GIANT CATARACT

had noted all that had happened, and rubbed up against Bomba, chattering his delight.

"They have gone then, Doto?" asked Bomba, as he slung his bow over his shoulder. "They are far away?"

The monkey chattered an affirmative and pointed back of them.

"It is well," said Bomba. "I must go fast now to reach Casson. You saved Bomba's life, Doto. If you had not pulled him down the arrow would have found him. Doto is good, and Bomba will not forget."

A gratified look came into the monkey's eyes. He wanted to go along with Bomba, but the latter did not think it best.

"You stay here, Doto," he said, as he gently released his arm from the monkey's hold. "Bomba will soon see you again."

Then, as the affectionate animal seemed a little crestfallen, the boy added:

"But you can keep watch, and if you see the men with black hearts coming after Bomba, you must come and tell him. You can go faster through the trees than they can through the jungle."

Doto seemed to understand, and with a last pat of his paw shinned up the nearest tree. Bomba knew that he had left behind him a vigilant and faithful sentinel.



A glance at the sun told the boy that it was already afternoon, and that he must hasten if he were to reach the cabin of Pipina before the shadows of night closed about him.

So he started off at a rapid pace, employing all his woodsmanship to avoid obstacles and steer as straight a course as possible. For a part of the way there were woodland trails, and then he made good time. When he could, which was often, he jumped over the thickets instead of hacking his way through them, leaping into the air as lightly as a deer and landing softly on the other side.

Before long he was on familiar ground, and knew that he was reaching the cabin where he and Casson had lived for so many years. It had been burned during the last foray of the headhunters, and was now uninhabitable. But all that Bomba had ever known of home was bound up in it.

So a certain melancholy pleasure warmed his heart as he came out into the clearing and looked at the part of the smoke-blackened wall that remained standing. Without being conscious of it, tears stood in his eyes, and he vowed that he would rebuild when the headhunters should have removed their dreaded presence from the jungle.

But he had no time now to indulge in reflections. A hasty search of the river bank revealed his canoe in the tree-hung inlet where he had hidden it.

He untied it, sent it with a push into the middle

of the stream, and began paddling down the river.

It was a long journey, but his powerful arms sent the canoe whizzing along at a great pace. The current was with him, and he knew that, barring accidents, he would reach the hut of Pipina before dark.

But "accidents," he had come to learn, were almost daily occurrences in the jungle, and he did not abate a jot of his vigilance, his keen eyes keeping on the lookout everywhere—at the water for snags or alligators, at either shore for animal or human enemies, on the trees that overhung the stream for lurking anacondas.

But though always on the alert, his subconscious mind was busy with thoughts of his recent journey and of that which was to come. Would the latter be more satisfactory than the former? Would Sobrinini complete the story regarding the mystery of his parentage that Jojasta had left so incomplete?

Who was Sobrinini? What did she know? And even if she did know, what would she tell?

Did Casson know her? Would the mention of her name unlock the door of his memory, that door that he had tried so desperately but fruitlessly to open?

But here Bomba's questioning stopped as the thought came to him that perhaps there would be no Casson to tell him anything. The old natural-

ist had been so weak and frail when he had left him! His hold on life had been so slender! Perhaps the thread had already snapped.

The thought was an agonizing one to Bomba, and spurred him to such efforts that the paddle swept in a wide semicircle as he propelled his slight craft through the water.

At such a rate of speed did he travel that long before he had expected he found himself in the vicinity of his goal.

When he realized that Pipina's cabin lay beyond a turn of the river just ahead, Bomba slackened speed. His habitual caution, bred of long years in the jungle, asserted itself. He wanted to inspect the cabin before approaching it.

So, despite his impatience, he rested from his paddling and let the craft drift with the current until he rounded the bend.

What he saw then made him dip his paddle deep and send the canoe in frantic haste toward the shore.

Before the door of the cabin crouched a huge puma, preparing for a spring through the doorway!

## CHAPTER IV

### A TERRIFIC STRUGGLE

AT sight of the crouching brute, Bomba shouted with all his might.

The beast turned at the shout, fangs bared and eyes flashing with rage, to meet the newcomer. Then, with its tail lashing its flanks, it advanced toward the river bank.

At the same moment a roar came from within the cabin. And with the roar was blended the scream of a woman in mortal terror.

As the canoe approached the bank, Bomba fitted an arrow to his string, drew it to the head and let it go.

The haste with which he shot and the motion of the boat disturbed his aim, so that it just grazed the animal's head, inflicting a slight flesh wound, but no mortal injury.

But the pain inflamed the puma's rage, and as the canoe had now come within a few feet of the bank, it prepared to spring.

But just as it was about to launch itself into

the air a second arrow from Bomba's bow struck fair to its heart.

With a fearful howl the beast rolled over and over for a moment, then straightened out and lay still.

With scarcely a second glance at his dead adversary, Bomba leaped on the bank and started to run toward the cabin.

The hut consisted of two rooms, a larger one in the front and a much smaller one in the rear. A flimsy door with one rope hinge broken connected the two.

In the swift glance he sent inside as he reached the outer doorway, Bomba saw no trace of human occupants.

What he did see was a puma, larger than the one he had slain outside, clawing at the inner door between the two rooms and at times hurling its huge body against the door. It was a dilapidated door at the best, and would long since have yielded to the beast's attack had it not been for some barriers placed against it on the other side.

Bomba took in the situation in an instant. Pipina had seen the beasts approaching and, taking Casson with her, had retreated to the inner room, shut the door, and piled against it whatever furniture she could gather in her frantic haste.

But that it was pitifully inadequate was apparent at a glance. Already there were breaks in



the door that the puma was trying to enlarge with its claws so that it could push its body through. From the other side of the door came the frantic screams of Pipina, seeing death so near at hand.

In a flash Bomba fitted an arrow to his bow and let it go. It struck the puma in the shoulder, inflicting a serious wound but not enough to cripple it.

With a roar of rage the brute turned to meet its new enemy. With one spring it was at the door.

The movement had been so lightning fast that Bomba had no time to shoot again. His only salvation lay in flight.

Turning, he ran like a deer toward the river bank, hoping to regain his canoe and push out into the stream. But even as he did so he felt that it was hopeless. He was fleet, but the puma was fleetier. Before he could reach the water it would be upon him.

Just then he saw out of the corner of his eye a third puma coming with giant bounds into the clearing. Then indeed he gave himself up for lost.

He drew his knife, determined to die fighting. That he was about to die he had no doubt.

But just as he felt the hot breath of his pursuer on his neck there was a terrific snarling behind him and the impact of huge bodies.

He glanced behind him and his flight suddenly halted.

The two great pumas were locked in deadly combat, clawing and biting, rolling over and over as each sought to get a grip on the other's throat.

It was a battle of Titans, and Bomba looked on with amazement that was transformed into an expression of delight as he recognized the last comer.

"Polulu!" he exclaimed. "Good Polulu! He has come to Bomba's help."

He circled about the combatants, seeking to get in a thrust with his knife that might decide the battle in favor of the friendly puma. But the fight was so fast and furious that he was as likely to wound one as the other.

But Polulu needed no help. His weight and courage finally told. Before long he succeeded in getting the throat hold he was seeking, and then the end was only a matter of a few moments.

But it had been a terrible fight, and after Polulu had risen from the body of his dead adversary he was hardly able to move. He staggered away a few paces, and then lay down panting and exhausted.

Bomba let him rest awhile, and then went up to him and caressed the great, shaggy head.

"Polulu is a good friend," he said gratefully. "It is not the first time he has saved Bomba's life. There is no one in the jungle as big and strong as Polulu."

The puma tried to purr, and licked the hand that fondled him.

Their strange friendship was of long standing. It dated from the time when Bomba had come across the puma trapped by a tree in the jungle, that had fallen upon the animal and broken its leg. The boy of the jungle had been stirred to pity at the creature's distress. He had released him from the weight that held him, bound up the broken leg, and brought him food and drink.

By the time Polulu, as Bomba named the puma, had fully recovered, a strong attachment had grown up between the oddly assorted pair. Their paths often crossed in the forest, and more than once the great beast had saved Bomba from serious danger. Now, once more, he had come to the rescue when the lad was at the last extremity.

Leaving the animal to lick its wounds, Bomba hastened to the hut. Its inmates had no inkling of what had happened except that for some mysterious reason the attacks upon the door had ceased. The screams of the woman had given place to moaning.

"Pipina! Casson!" shouted Bomba. "It is Bomba calling. The pumas are dead. Open the door."

Again there came a scream, but this time it was one of delight. There was a hurried removal of

the barriers on the other side of the door, and then the old squaw came rushing out and threw her arms about Bomba's neck, crying and laughing in the same breath.

Behind her came Cody Casson, his steps slow and uncertain, looking so frail that it seemed as though a zephyr would have blown him away, but with an affectionate welcome in his faded eyes.

But he was still alive, and at that moment nothing else mattered. Dear Casson! Good old Casson! There were tears in Bomba's eyes as he rushed forward and folded the old man in his embrace.

The two were roused by a shriek from Pipina, who had gone to the doorway and now came rushing back in terror.

"There is another puma there!" she cried. "He is bigger than the others! Quick! Let us get behind the door again."

Bomba spoke to her soothingly and with a smile.

"He is not like the others," he said. "He is Bomba's friend. I killed one puma but he killed the other. I will bring him here, and you will see."

But Pipina, despite Bomba's assurances, had no desire for an introduction to the giant puma, and shook her head decidedly, the while she muttered prayers to her gods.

So Bomba had to be content with bringing out a

haunch of meat and sitting beside Polulu and talking to him, while the latter munched away contentedly. Then the great beast rose, stretched himself, rubbed his head against Bomba's hand, and departed again for his haunts in the jungle.

They had a great feast that night, for Pipina displayed all her skill in making a fitting celebration of the wanderer's return.

Bomba was almost famished, and ate greedily while Pipina beamed with smiles at his tribute to her cooking. The lad was glad to see also that Casson had a better appetite than he had had when Bomba had left him. It was evident that Pipina had taken good care of him.

But though the old naturalist had improved physically, there was no change for the better in his mental condition. Bomba studied him during the meal and grieved to see that his mind was still weak and wandering. Would that closed door in his mind never open?

When the meal was finished and Pipina was busy with clearing away the food that was left and performing her simple household tasks, Bomba sat down beside Casson and told the story of his journey.

Casson listened, holding Bomba's brown hand affectionately in his weak, worn one, happy beyond words to have the boy back again with him. But it was with difficulty that the old man kept



the thread of the story. At times he would interpose vague, irrelevant questions that showed how hard it was for him to understand.

"I saw Jojasta," said Bomba, "but it was too late. He was dying. A pillar of the temple fell on him. And then the earth opened and swallowed him."

"Jojasta? Jojasta?" repeated Casson, in a puzzled way. "Oh, yes, he was the medicine man of the Moving Mountain. But why did you want to see Jojasta?"

"Don't you remember?" asked Bomba. "You told me that if I saw him he could tell me about my father and mother."

"Father and mother," murmured Casson, and lapsed into silence, during which he seemed to be cudgeling his poor, disordered brain to make it yield up its secrets.

"He thought I was Bartow when he saw me," went on Bomba.

At the name the old man brightened.

"Bartow!" he exclaimed. "I have heard that name."

"Is he my father?" asked Bomba eagerly.

Casson tried desperately to remember.

"I—I don't know," he said at last piteously.

Bomba's heart sank, but he tried again.

"I asked him about Laura, too," he went on, watching Casson narrowly.

"Laura, dear sweet Laura," murmured the old man with emotion, tears coming to his eyes.

"Who is she? Where is she? Oh, tell me, Casson!" Bomba begged, with all his heart in his voice.

"She is—she is—oh, why is it that I cannot remember?" exclaimed Casson in desperation.

"Jojasta knew. Jojasta could have told you." the old man went on after a pause. "But you say that he is dead."

"He is dead," replied Bomba. "But before he died he told me that Sobrinini——"

Then came a startling interruption.

## CHAPTER V

### TERRIBLE JAWS

AT the mention of Sobrinini's name Cody Casson sprang to his feet, his weakness temporarily banished, and began to dance around the room, singing in a cracked, treble voice "la, la, la!" over and over again. Not until he was exhausted did he cease his gyrations and sink quivering into his chair.

Bomba watched the sudden transformation with consternation and alarm. What did this strange outbreak mean?

But he forebore to question until Casson ceased trembling and became once more like his customary self. Then the boy leaned toward the old man and said gently:

"I was talking about Sobrinini." Again the old man started, but did not rise. Bomba went on:

"Jojasta told me to go to Sobrinini, she of the Pilati tribe beyond the Giant Cataract, to find out about my father and mother."

"Yes, Nini ought to know," muttered Casson. "She ought to know."

"Who is Sobrinini and why should she know?" asked Bomba.

But Casson did not answer. He sat, muttering incoherently, and seemed so tired from his recent excitement that Bomba was afraid to press the matter further.

So he tried to calm the old man's agitation and a little while later assisted him into his hammock where he almost immediately fell asleep.

Bomba himself got into his own hammock and tried to sleep. But although he was dead tired, he found himself for a long time unable to close his eyes.

He tossed restlessly about, his mind in a tumult of unanswered questions. Why was it that Casson had betrayed such intense excitement at the mention of Sobrinini's name? Why had he referred to her as Nini? That sounded to Bomba like a pet name, implying long acquaintance and familiarity. Why did he indulge in that wild fantastic dance and singing?

One thing was reasonably certain. It was hopeless to count much on Casson. The disjointed words that his questioning had brought from the old man could not be pieced together so as to give him any reliable information.

So he must go to Sobrinini, must face all the dangers that would inevitably await him in that long journey to the Giant Cataract. The thought

of abandoning his quest did not even occur to him. The urge to find out about his parentage was, if possible, stronger than it had been before. No difficulties could daunt or deter him.

With his determination firmly fixed in his mind, he fell at last into an uneasy slumber.

He found plenty of work awaiting him when he woke in the morning. In the first place, he had to replace the door that had been so nearly shattered by the puma, so that Casson and Pipina could have better protection, if exposed to similar dangers in the future.

He spent much time and labor on this, and when a stout door was at last completed, together with a heavy bar that could be dropped into place, he felt much easier in his mind.

Then there was the problem of provisioning the cabin during his coming absence. Though Casson and Pipina had had plenty while he was gone, their stock was now greatly depleted and needed replenishing. So he planned to spend several days in the jungle in order to bring them home plenty of meat. This would be cured by Pipina and would keep indefinitely.

It was bright and early one morning that he bade Casson and the woman farewell and set out for his hunting trip in the jungle.

So far as he could learn, the headhunters had



left that district. He hoped they would stay away a long time, preferably forever.

He had not gone far before Kiki and Woowoo, the friendly parrots, fluttered from the trees and dropped one on each shoulder. A little later Doto joined him together with other monkeys, so that he was soon the center of a group of birds and animals, all competing for a word or a pat of the hand.

He talked to them, and they chattered back. Then he took out his harmonica and played for them, to their great delight. So much did the lonely boy enjoy converse with those who loved him that it was with reluctance he finally sent them away, so that he could go on with his hunting.

Two hours passed without anything coming in range of his weapons save small creatures that he disdained to notice. He was after larger game, preferably a tapir, a creature as large as a calf, whose meat was succulent and nourishing. A single one of these would furnish meat enough for a month.

So he turned his steps toward a large river where he knew these animals were likely to be found.

For a long time he had no luck. The sun reached its zenith and dropped down toward the western sky. There were plenty of tracks, but it

was mid-afternoon before he caught a glimpse of what he sought.

Then, coming out from a fringe of trees not far from the river's edge, he saw a large tapir browsing on the bank.

It offered an easy target, and Bomba fitted an arrow to his bow. But unfortunately the wind was blowing toward the tapir and carried Bomba's scent with it.

The animal looked up, saw Bomba, and without an instant's hesitation plunged into the river.

Ordinarily that would have ended Bomba's chances, for the tapir can swim for a long distance under water. His game, therefore, could easily have got beyond bowshot before it would have been compelled to come to the surface for air.

The boy gave an exclamation of vexation, which was checked, however, as his eyes, ranging up and down the river bank, caught sight of a canoe drawn up among some sedge grass near the shore. No doubt it belonged to a native who had left it there while he made a trip into the jungle.

Bomba ran to it, untied it, seized the paddle, and pushed out into the stream, following as nearly as he could guess the direction that the tapir had taken.

But a stern chase is a long chase, as Bomba soon found. When the tapir did come to the surface, it was a long way from where Bomba imagined it

would be, and before he had come within range of it the beast had gone under again.

But Bomba's second guess proved a better one, and the next time the tapir came to the surface the boy was within ten feet of it.

Bomba dropped his paddle and seized his weapon. The bow twanged.

The arrow penetrated to the heart of the animal, and it died almost without a struggle.

Seizing a rope that lay in the bottom of the canoe, Bomba made a noose and threw it around the head and shoulders of the tapir, securing it before it could sink. Then he tied the other end of the rope to the canoe, and set out for the shore, towing his quarry behind him.

It was an arduous task, for the tapir weighed several hundred pounds, and Bomba made slow progress through the water. But his heart was exultant, for he had bagged his game. His day had not been fruitless.

His progress was checked suddenly, so suddenly that he was thrown on his back on the bottom of the canoe.

He scrambled to his feet and looked back, thinking that the body of the tapir might have caught on a snag. At what he saw his heart almost stopped beating.

It was no snag that had checked the progress of the canoe.

A monster alligator, the cayman of the Amazon region, was tugging at the tapir, from which it had already torn a piece of the flank.

Then, as Bomba looked, the water was broken in several places by the horrid snouts and hideous jaws of other caymen, that had smelled the blood of the tapir and were hastening to have their share of the feast.

Bomba's first feeling was that of chagrin at losing his prey. But this gave way at once to an overpowering sense of his own danger.

Those great jaws tearing at the tapir were sure to upset the canoe. He must cut the rope.

He drew his machete, sprang to the stern, and commenced to hack madly at the rope. Before he could cut through a single strand, there was a terrific jerk, the canoe turned over, and Bomba was thrown into the river.

By this time the river was swarming with alligators!

## CHAPTER VI

### PURSUED BY AN ALLIGATOR

BOMBA was hurled headlong into the green depths of the river. This in itself would not have bothered him. He could swim like a fish and was almost as much at home in the water as on land.

But a thrill of terror passed through him as he realized that not far away was a group of monsters that could swim faster than he could, and whose terrible jaws, once clamped on him, could bite him in half.

His mind worked with lightning swiftness. He must remain under water as long as possible. His instinct for direction told him where the land lay.

So instead of permitting himself to shoot up to the surface, he remained under and struck out toward the shore.

For more than a minute he shot ahead at a rapid pace. And only when it seemed as though his lungs would burst did he at last rise to the surface.

He shook the water from his eyes and looked behind him. He could see at least half a dozen



caymen tearing at the body of the tapir and others swimming about greedy for their share.

His only hope lay in the possibility that the brutes would be so busy fighting each other for a portion of the spoils that they would not notice him at the distance that he had already attained.

But his chase for the tapir had carried him far out into the stream and the shore seemed still a terrible distance away.

He summoned up all his resolution and struck out for land, keeping himself as low in the water as possible and moving with scarcely a ripple.

For a time it looked as though his hope might be realized. Twice he looked behind him, and each time the brutes still seemed to be fighting about the body of the tapir.

But the third time he looked back he saw something that filled him with consternation.

A huge alligator had detached itself from the group and was making toward him at full speed. He could see the long, scaly body, the fiery, red eyes and the hideous jaws with their rows of glistening teeth.

Bomba turned and swam for his life.

As the lad swam he measured the distance to the shore. He knew that the alligator was coming at a faster pace than his own, but he hoped that the start he had gained might yet enable him to

## 44 BOMBA AT THE GIANT CATARACT

reach the shore before those terrible jaws should close on him.

It was a close calculation, but he decided that he had a chance. He put redoubled power into his strokes and swam as he had never swum before.

But his heart sank as he noted how steep the bank was at the nearest point. Had the shore been shelving, he might have been able to find a footing when the water grew shallower and rush up on land before the cayman could reach him.

But the bank was three or four feet high and ran straight up and down. He would have to reach up, grasp the edge and pull himself up. And he realized only too well that before he could do this the alligator might have caught him.

In his heart Bomba felt that he was doomed.

But his indomitable spirit refused to give up. He called to his aid all his reserves of force and swam on. As a last resort he had his knife. He could stab with it, perhaps hold off for a moment the vicious rushes of his foe. But as against a knife, of course the alligator would conquer in the end.

One last glance Bomba cast behind. The cayman had made up much of the distance between them and was now fearfully close. A minute more perhaps and then——

Bomba cast one farewell look at the sky and felt for his knife.

But as he looked upward, something brushed across his face. It was the branch of a tree that hung far out over the water.

A ray of hope cut through the blackness of the boy's despair. With the quickness of a cat, he grasped the branch and swung himself up on it out of the water. Even as he did so, he heard beneath him the snap of the alligator's jaws.

But those awful jaws missed the boy by a hair's breadth. The speed at which the brute was going carried it several yards farther before it could turn. And by that time, spurred on by dreadful necessity, Bomba had climbed farther up on the heavy bough and was out of reach.

The rage of the baffled man-eater was fearful to witness. It churned the water into foam and emitted frightful bellowings as it leaped half out of the water, trying to reach the prey of which it had been cheated. It gnashed its teeth and its red eyes gleamed with fury.

For a full half hour Bomba lay extended on the branch, feeling with unspeakable relief and delight the strength come back into his muscles and vitality creep into his exhausted frame.

The alligator still kept up its watch, and Bomba wondered why. Did it not know that its quarry had escaped? Then he realized that the brute was not so stupid after all.

For the alligator is a land as well as a water

animal, and though its prey had baffled it for a while, it knew that the boy, soon or late, would have to descend the tree. And when Bomba should slide down the trunk to the ground, his enemy meant to clamber up the bank and be waiting at the foot of the tree to receive him.

Luckily Bomba's bow was still slung over his shoulder and his arrows were at his belt. His immersion had been so sudden that he had not had time to discard them. They had hindered him in his swimming, but now he blessed the fact that they were with him.

His position was a difficult one to shoot from, for he would have to use both hands for his bow and depend on his sense of equilibrium to keep him secure on the branch. If he should lose his balance, he would topple into the water, and he shuddered to think what would happen after that.

He solved his problem in part by wrapping both legs closely around the bough. Then he fitted an arrow to his string and took careful aim.

He knew that about the only vulnerable part of the alligator was the eye. An arrow striking anywhere else would simply rebound from the tough hide without inflicting any material damage.

It was some time before Bomba could get a good view of his target. The cayman kept swimming about with its head half submerged in the turbid water.

But at last the alligator lifted its head and glared at the boy. At the same instant Bomba shot.

The arrow went straight to its mark, pierced the creature's eye and penetrated to the brain.

There was an awful bellow and a tremendous thrashing about for a few moments. Then the alligator slowly sank below the surface of the river.

Bomba waited for some time, but the body did not reappear. The arrow had done its work well.

Once fully convinced of this, the boy made his way to the trunk of the tree and slid down it to the ground.

It was good to feel the earth again beneath his feet. His heart swelled with gratitude. True, he had been cheated. The alligators had robbed him of his tapir. But they had not robbed him of his life, and compared with that fact everything else seemed insignificant.

The sun was near its setting now, and his hunting would have to be deferred to the next day. Soon the four-footed hunters of the jungle would themselves be abroad, and it behooved Bomba to make himself safe for the night.

Ordinarily he would have collected brush and made a fire, trusting to the flames to keep wild beasts at bay. But now, owing to the possible

presence of the dreaded headhunters in the jungle, he dared do nothing that would betray his presence to the marauders. He had not detected any signs of them so far, but a sort of sixth sense told him that they had not yet returned to their homes above the Giant Cataract.

He gathered some jaboty eggs which he ate raw, and which, with some cured meat he had brought with him from the cabin of Pipina, made a simple but satisfying meal.

Then he cast about for some place in which he could pass the night.

He found it in the center of a dense thorn thicket, into which he penetrated slowly and with great care, pushing the thorny stalks aside so that they would not wound his flesh. Once in the center, he beat down enough of the brush to serve him as a bed, and covered it with bunches of soft moss that he had gathered near the river's edge.

Here he was safe. Even if his scent betrayed him, no wild beast was likely to venture through the thorns. And if, perchance, some prowling brute, more daring or hungry than the rest, should try it, the noise made would awaken the boy at once and he could trust to his weapons for the rest.

As he lay there, waiting for sleep to come, his thoughts were tintured somewhat with bitterness. Why should his life be in constant peril? Why



should he be doomed to be hunted by beast and reptile?

It was not as though he were a native of the jungle. Then he might have accepted his lot as the decree of fate and borne whatever came to him with stolidity, if not with resignation.

But his real place was not there. He was white. He was heir to all the instincts, traditions and ambitions of his race. He belonged elsewhere. Then why was he here? Why were his aspirations and longings doomed to be thwarted? What had he done to deserve such a fate?

His thoughts turned to Frank Parkhurst. What a difference there was between their lots! No doubt by this time Frank had reached one of the cities he had talked about and whose wonders had so deeply stirred the jungle boy. To-night Frank would be sleeping safely in a soft bed. He would have abundance of good food. He would be laughing and talking with others of his kind. And his mother, the woman with the golden hair, would print a good-night kiss upon his lips.

But Bomba had no mother near him to kiss him good-night. He had no friends to talk to, to clap on the shoulder in jovial fashion, as Gillis had done to Dorn. Monkeys and parrots were his only intimates, except poor demented Casson and the squaw, Pipina.

As to laughter—when had Bomba last laughed? He could not remember.

In this melancholy mood he at last fell asleep.

But his depression vanished when he awoke the next morning. His sleep had been undisturbed. Weariness had departed. The current of his blood ran swiftly through his young veins. The skies were azure. It was good to be alive.

And his optimism was increased by the good fortune that for the next two days attended his hunting. Tapirs, deer, agouti and other game fell before his arrows, until he had accumulated enough to supply the cabin for weeks to come.

A good deal of his time was consumed in skinning the animals. He could not carry them home bodily, as he had no means of conveyance except his sturdy shoulders. So he cut off the choicest parts, wrapped them in great leaves tied with bush cord, and on the third day after he had left the cabin set out on his return.

All this time he had kept a sharp lookout for the headhunters. But during the whole of the hunting trip he had come across no signs of them.

He would have felt easier in his mind, however, if he had occasionally met some of the friendly natives that ordinarily dwelt in that region. They, too, were conspicuous by their absence. If the headhunters had really gone, why had not the natives returned to their usual haunts?

The answer was not far to seek. Those dreaded invaders were probably still lurking somewhere in the district, and if Bomba had not crossed their trail, it was simply a bit of good fortune.

A sense of impending calamity grew upon him as he neared his destination. The burden on his shoulders was heavy, but it was matched by the burden on his heart.

He tried to throw off his depression, assuring himself that it was due to weariness. Soon he would reach the cabin, be once again with Casson and Pipina, and all would be well. So he communed with himself, though not with much conviction.

The journey back to Pipina's hut was made in rapid time, the jungle boy being spurred on by his anxiety.

He turned the bend of the stream from which he could see the hut, and an exclamation of relief escaped him as he saw that it was still standing. He had half-feared that he would find it burned or demolished.

But it was there, and everything about it seemed placid and serene. No puma this time ranged before the door. It seemed an abode of peace.

"Bomba was a fool," he told himself, as he hurried forward.

He gave the loud halloo with which he was accustomed to announce his coming. Usually

this brought either Casson or Pipina to the door at once.

This time his call evoked no answer. No figure appeared at the doorway, nor could he hear any stirring within.

He called again, this time in louder tones. But again there came no answer.

His uneasiness returning at this unusual circumstance, he hastily ran up to the hut.

The door stood open and a hurried glance into the outer room showed that it was empty.

He rushed in and examined the farther room. No one was there.

"Casson!" he called in a frenzy of anxiety. "Casson! Pipina! Where are you?"

His only answer was the echo of his voice.

Casson was gone! Pipina was gone!

## CHAPTER VII

### CARRIED INTO CAPTIVITY

FOR a moment Bomba stood stupefied with dread. Then he ran out into the open.

He beat the bushes about the hut. He dashed down to the edge of the ygapo, his quick eye scanning the expanse for some sign of the passing of Casson and Pipina.

Nothing anywhere. No footprints, no tramping of the bushes, no clue to guide him in a search for the missing ones.

To all appearances no one had trodden that deserted spot since Bomba had returned from his journey to the Moving Mountain.

Yet Casson was gone. Pipina was gone.

Bomba retraced his steps to the hut, his mind in a ferment of bewilderment and grief.

Indians! Only Indians could traverse the jungle with the silence and stealth of ghosts, leaving no trace behind.

"Nascanora!" The word hissed between the boy's clenched teeth. "This is your work! If

you have killed Casson, Bomba will not rest until he has found your heart with an arrow, a bullet, or a knife!"

The boy reentered the empty hut with a sharp pain stabbing at his heart. He would search the cabin more minutely now for some sign, some clue, to the whereabouts of the absent ones. And if he could not find it there, he would call into play all his skill in woodcraft to find and follow their trail. For trail there must be somewhere. They could not have vanished into thin air.

Inch by inch, he scrutinized the walls, the floor, even every crevice of the crude and meagre furniture, thinking he might find some message from Casson. It was almost a forlorn hope, but it was all that he had at the moment.

He had nearly abandoned even this hope, however, when he discovered a faint scrawl on the wall in the darkest corner of the hut. He bent closer, and his brows drew together in a scowl as he tried to decipher the writing.

Then suddenly a hoarse cry of rage escaped him. His eyes blazed in the shadowy hut like those of an angry puma.

For this was what he read:

*"Nascanora is taking away Casson, Pipina, Hondura to camp near Giant Cataract. Come. Help."*



So the headhunters had achieved their end at last! They had captured the helpless old man whom their superstition had led them to regard as a Man of Evil, a magician whose spells had brought blight on their crops and sickness to their people. Poor old Casson, whose one desire was to help rather than hurt!

They would torture him. They would make him a sacrifice to their gods. And when flesh and blood could no longer stand their torments, they would kill him and place his head on the wigwam of their chief.

Bomba's rage was terrific, and it would have fared ill with the savage chief if at that moment he had come within reach of the boy's knife.

The boy read the scrawl again. So they had taken Hondura too, the friendly chief of the Araos tribe, the father of the pretty little girl, Pirah, who had once saved Bomba's life!

Why had Nascanora made Hondura captive with Casson and the squaw? Was it because Hondura and his tribe had been on friendly terms with Bomba and the old naturalist? Or did Nascanora think that the Araos tribe was becoming too powerful, and had he hoped by depriving them of their chief to render his people helpless and throw confusion and panic into their hearts?

But that problem could be left till later for solution. The pressing thing was to plan for the

rescue of the captives before they were so far away that their recovery would be impossible.

When his first fury had exhausted itself, Bomba left the writing on the wall and sat down on the threshold of the hut, the better to think out a course of action.

"Near the Giant Cataract" said that rude scrawl penciled by poor Casson, when the attention of his captors was momentarily diverted. Bomba had no clear idea as to how far away that was or what direction would have to be followed to reach it. But from what he had gathered from the natives from time to time, the place was at a great distance, and he knew that a long and arduous journey lay before him.

That is, if he had to go that far in order to catch up with the raiding party. There was nothing in the hut on which he could base any judgment as to the time the capture had taken place.

It might have occurred the very day that he had left on his hunting trip. In that case, they would have had a three days' start of him. Or again it might have happened yesterday. In that event, his task of overtaking them would be that much easier.

No matter how much they wanted to hurry, no large party could proceed very fast, encumbered as they were with prisoners and probably laden

with spoils. Bomba could cover as much ground in one day as they could in two or possibly in three. So he had little doubt of his ability to overtake them before they could get very far.

What he would do if he should come up with them, he did not pause to consider. No plan formed now would be of any service. He must be guided by circumstances as they developed. But he had enough confidence in his own quick wit to believe that he would be able to shape such circumstances to meet his ends.

But time pressed, and he could spend no more time in reflection. He rose to his feet and secured some cured meat from Pipina's stores to feed him on the way. He would have no time to spend in hunting food when there were human enemies requiring his attention.

He tested his bow, put a new string on it, and replenished his store of arrows. His revolver and machete were already at his belt. He took one more look about the cabin to make sure he had overlooked nothing and plunged into the jungle.

Like a hound when trying to pick up a trail, he described a long circle, scanning the ground narrowly for every sign that might indicate the direction in which the party had gone.

For a long time his search was unsuccessful. At last his eyes brightened, for they rested on a little strip of cloth fluttering on a thorn bush. He

examined it carefully and recognized it as a strip torn from a loose dress such as the Indian women wear. Probably it was torn from Pipina's garment.

This was something, but not enough. He must find a second strip, if possible, and the line formed by the two would give him the direction in which the party were traveling.

Before long his eager search was rewarded. Now he could shape his course, and he hurried forward with redoubled speed.

The bits of cloth also told the jungle boy another story. The fact that they had been torn off at all showed that the savages had been hurrying their captives along at great speed, and so roughly that they took no care to avoid the thorn bushes that tore the clothes and probably the skin.

Bomba's heart burned within him as he pictured poor, weak Casson driven along, perhaps flogged to make him hasten. How long could he endure such treatment in his feeble condition? Perhaps even now he had succumbed to the hardships of the journey! Bomba gritted his teeth and his eyes flamed with fury.

He had not gone far when his jungle instinct warned him of danger in the immediate vicinity. Motions as vague as shadows, faint rustlings that could not have been detected by an untrained ear, told him that something or someone was trailing

him, keeping step with him, moving as swiftly and silently as he. From being the hunter, he had become the hunted.

When Bomba paused the slight rustlings stopped. When he moved on they were resumed.

Still he continued on his way. Whether his pursuer were beast or human he could not tell. But the jungle lad knew that, whether beast or human, the surest way to provoke attack was to betray a knowledge of his danger.

To keep on would be at least to delay attack and perhaps derange the plans of his pursuer. But when the attack at last came—if it should come—he would be ready.

Suddenly he became conscious that he was encircled. The faint sound, which had been behind him, was echoed now on the right and the left and in the front. His enemies, whoever they were, were closing in upon him.

There was nothing that his eyes could tell him. Not a leaf stirred nor was there any movement in the brush. There was only that ghostly rustling that to Bomba's sensitive ears was as plainly perceptible as the rumbling of distant thunder.

Then something shaped itself, vague and dim behind a thicket. Like a beast at bay, Bomba crouched, pulled his bow from his shoulder and plucked an arrow from his pouch.

Before he could fit the arrow to the string a

hideous chorus of shouts rent the air, and like magic the jungle was filled with men, men with the ferocious faces of demons, who rushed upon him, shouting and brandishing their sharp, murderous knives above their heads.

Bomba had no time to turn and flee. He dropped his bow, whipped out his machete and backed toward a tree, only to feel himself seized from behind and borne helpless to the ground.

A score of natives bent above him, their faces menacing, their knives pointed at his throat.

"Hondura?" grunted one of them. "Where is he?"

A light dawned upon Bomba. These were braves of the Araos tribe seeking their leader. They blamed him, Bomba, for the disappearance of their chief—Bomba, who at that very moment was on his way to rescue that chief from captivity.

"Let me up and I will tell you," he said, refusing to quail before the fierce eyes directed upon him.

They hesitated, evidently suspicious of some trick. But finally the leader, a strapping native named Lodo, whom Bomba remembered having seen on his recent visit to their village, ordered that a close ring be formed about the lad. Then he ordered him to stand up.

Bomba did so, and Lodo advanced toward him, knife in hand, his gaze lowering.



"Where is Hondura, our chief?" he demanded. "You hide him."

"The bad chief, Nascanora, take good chief, Hondura, prisoner," Bomba replied, his brown eyes holding the little, shifting ones of Lodo with great earnestness. "He take, too, my friend Casson and Pipina, the squaw. Come with me to the hut, and I will show you the writing on the wall."

It was plain that the Indians considered this a subterfuge or a trap, and there was considerable parleying before Lodo finally announced that they would take him to the hut.

"But you fool us, Bomba," threatened Lodo with a suggestive twist of his knife, "and I cut out your heart—so!"

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MAN WITH THE SPLIT NOSE

BOMBA raged within himself at this enforced delay in his journey. But resistance against such odds would be nothing less than suicide.

And apprehension was in his heart as he moved along with his captors. He was by no means sure that he would be able to prove to the natives that he spoke the truth concerning their chief.

After all, the only proof he had was that writing on the wall, and if they thought that he was trying to deceive them they might regard the writing as part of his plan. There was no likelihood that any of them would be able to decipher it for themselves.

So it was with no great confidence as to the ultimate outcome that he made his way back to the cabin, surrounded by the lowering bucks of the Araos tribe and feeling the suspicious gaze of Lodo boring into his back.

They traveled swiftly, as the way was familiar, and it was not long before they reached the deserted hut. Bomba led them into it and pointed out the faint scrawl on the wall.

Lodo could make nothing of it, and looked from the writing back to Bomba with a fierce scowl and a tightened grasp upon his knife.

"You read," he said, and the cruel point of the knife pricked Bomba's bare shoulder and brought a tiny trickle of blood. "No fool Lodo."

Bomba read the words twice under Lodo's direction, and still the giant was unconvinced. The other bucks patterned their conduct on his and crowded around Bomba, muttering and growling like beasts of the jungle about to close in on a helpless prey.

"You lie!" The point of Lodo's knife pricked again at Bomba's shoulder, deeper this time, and a red stream followed it.

Still Bomba did not flinch, giving the sullen Indian look for look without a sign of fear.

"You lie!" again shouted Lodo, working himself into a frenzy of fury. "Braves see Hondura near the hut of Casson, the white medicine man. Hondura not come back to his people. Bomba hide Hondura. Bomba must die!"

His knife was upraised in menace. A shudder of anguish passed through Bomba, but he said no word. A dozen hands reached out to seize him, a dozen knives were pointed at his throat——

"Wait!" A guttural voice came from the doorway of the hut, and Grico, he of the one eye and the split nose, forced his way through the ring of

angry Indians. "Let me see writing on the wall. I tell you if Bomba lie."

Grico was a native of tremendous physical strength. He had for a while lived in one of the towns on the coast, and as a boy had been taken under the care of an English missionary school. Here he had been taught the rudiments of education. But the call of his jungle blood had proved too strong to be resisted, and he had run away and thrown in his lot with the Araos tribe.

There, when he reached manhood, he became known as the swiftest runner and the greatest hunter of them all. He had lost one eye and acquired his split nose in a battle with jaguars, in which he had shown almost superhuman strength and courage.

He had become therefore a person of great influence in the tribe, not only because of his prowess as a hunter but also because of his knowledge of the world outside and his education, which gave him great superiority over his ignorant and simple-minded mates. And he was cunning enough to make this count for all that it was worth and considerably more, considering that, after all, he had gained only the merest smattering of learning.

Bomba knew something of the history of Grico, and hope sprang in him anew as the giant caboclo made his way through the sullen group and peered

at that faint scrawl upon the wall. Slowly he read the words aloud:

*"Nascanora is taking away Casson, Pipina, Hondura to camp near Giant Cataract. Come. Help."*

Then he turned to the Indians, his one eye gleaming at them in a contemptuous manner.

"Bomba speaks truth," he said. "Those are the words he said, and that is the writing on the wall. Take the point of your knife away, Lodo. The boy is right. Chief Hondura has been taken away by the wicked Nascanora. We will capture Nascanora and tie him to a tree and pile the brushwood up about his knees and with flint and stone make red flames that will lick at his flesh and bones. Ayah! Ayah!"

The cry of vengeance, indescribably weird and savage, was taken up by the Indians and filled the jungle with a long wailing shriek that chilled the blood of Bomba as he thought of what might have happened to him had it not been for Grico's timely appearance.

Once their enmity was turned from him, the Indians became as friendly and pleasant as they had been savage a few moments before.

One of them found a bit of native cloth in the hut and bound it about the wound in Bomba's

shoulder. Then they squatted outside the hut to hold a council and decide upon plans for the rescue of their chief.

While the Indians talked in their guttural language, sometimes sitting for many minutes of silence between their laconic sentences, Bomba fretted and fumed, eager to be once more on the trail of the headhunters.

However, he could not risk offending Lodo and his braves, who might prove valuable helpers in his quest, by going off too abruptly. So he waited, answering as best he could the questions that Lodo and Grico put to him from time to time.

He told them of the previous visits of the headhunters to Casson's cabin, how he had beaten off their attacks, how he had wounded Nascanora himself, how he had captured Ruspak, their medicine man, and how in the jungle he had overcome the braves of Tocarora.

"I think there are two bands of headhunters," he said, when asked for his opinion. "Nascanora is at the head of one, and Tocarora, his half-brother, leads the other. They will join each other somewhere in the jungle. Then Nascanora will be strong enough to fight the Araos if they come looking for their chief."

"But they did not think of Grico!" said he of the split nose, his one eye gleaming balefully. "Grico will get other braves who will fight with



the Araos to get back Honduras. Honduras has been good to Grico. Grico will show that he is grateful."

Bomba knew that this was no idle boast. Grico's courage was so well established that he would have no trouble in rallying many bucks of other tribes under his leadership. If he could do this, the Araos and their auxiliaries would prove formidable enemies, even to the redoubtable head-hunters.

But Bomba knew that this would take time and be the subject of innumerable powwows before the avengers would get fairly started. And with the knowledge he had of Casson's danger he was in no mood for delay. He must go on. They could follow later.

He knew the risks he ran in going alone. He would be only one against the hordes of Nascanora. But his wit had served him so often where mere force would have failed that he was willing and eager to trust to it again.

So when a favorable opportunity presented, he broached his plan to his new-found allies.

"Bomba will go first and try to find the trail while Lodo and Grico are getting their braves together," he said. "If Bomba finds them near by, he will come back and tell you, so that you may come and fight them. If he finds they are far off, he will leave a trail of his own so that you may

move fast through the jungle. Does Bomba speak well?"

Lodo and Grico consulted.

"Bomba speaks well—" Lodo was beginning when there was a sudden commotion in the surrounding jungle. A moment later a strange company broke into the clearing.

Bomba saw that they were squaws of the Araos tribe. The faces of the women, usually so stolid, wore the ghastly gray of terror. They had come from afar and swiftly, for their flesh was torn by thorns and spiked vines and their breath came in gasps.

One of them, who was the squaw of Lodo and seemed to be the leader of the women, came over to her husband and stood before him, striving to regain breath enough to speak.

"What is it, woman?" cried Lodo. "What has happened?"

"The maloca." she got out at last. "Bucks come. They burn our houses. They carry off the women. They take the children. All gone."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SAVAGE RAIDERS

THE news fell with stunning effect upon the assembled bucks already wrought up to a high pitch of fury because of the capture of their chief. There was a hubbub of exclamations of grief and rage.

"Pirah gone, too," declared the woman, with a sweeping gesture of her hands.

"Pirah!" This was Bomba's voice, harsh and unlike his own, as he pushed through the group of scowling Indians. "You say Pirah taken too? Who were the bucks?"

"No know." The squaw shook her head. She had recovered her breath now, and, with the other women, was regaining her habitual stolid look. "They come—many come." She extended her ten fingers, closing and opening her hands several times to indicate an indefinite number. "Take women. Take children. We run away. Hide in bushes till they go. Then we come here."

Her story roused the Indians even more than the loss of their chief. That their native village,

or maloca, should have been invaded, their women and children carried off, was a crime that by their code merited only one punishment, and that torture and death.

The powwow broke up at once and the braves hurried away to their maloca, taking their women with them.

Bomba accompanied them for some distance, and then took leave of them, promising to pick up the trail at once and coöperate with them in every way possible in the rescue of their chief and kidnapped families, as well as of Casson and Pipina.

Then he left them to return with heavy and angry hearts to their despoiled maloca while he again sought out the path he had been pursuing when the onrush of Hondura's enraged braves had put such an abrupt stop to his journey.

His heart was sorer now than ever, for it was torture to him to think of the pretty little Pirah, the daughter of Hondura, who had once succored him, in the clutches of the evil Nascanora. For in his own mind Bomba did not doubt that the same hand that had directed the capture of Hondura had also ordered the despoiling and burning of the chief village of the Araos.

Bomba could but remember that on his one-time visit to the Araos tribe; when his life had

been in danger from the suspicion of Hondura and his braves, it had been little Pirah who had stood between him and a horrible fate, and by her innocent friendship had changed enmity to confidence and trust.

Another fact stood out from the story brought by the Araos squaws. It was that the headhunters must be present in large force, or they would not have dared thus to challenge the wrath of the most powerful native tribe of the district.

Probably the opinion he had voiced to Lodo and Grico had been the correct one. Nascanora was probably at the head of one band and Tocarora of another. The scrawl on the wall had told him that it was Nascanora in person who had raided the cabin of Pipina. While he was thus engaged, Tocarora had probably assailed the maloca. Later on, the two bands would have met to form a formidable combination.

If this were true, it would make Bomba's task all the harder. But he cared little for this. His heart was on fire with rage. In his present mood no danger could daunt him.

Then again he must rescue poor Cody Casson, no matter how difficult the undertaking. First, there was the love and gratitude the boy felt for his benefactor, but if the enemy should kill the old naturalist, Bomba was afraid that the last hope of clearing up his own identity—of finding out about

his father and maybe other relatives—would be gone forever.

So, having once more picked up his trail, he went on at a swifter and ever swifter pace, tormented at every step by fears of what might be happening at that very moment to his friends at the hands of the evil chief of the headhunters.

One thought, however, brought him a little comfort. He knew the boastful nature of the savages. Nascanora would want to exhibit his captives to the women of his tribe who had been left at home. He would be eager to impress them with his power. They, too, must have their share in the horrid festival that would end in the torture and death of most of his victims and the reduction to slavery of the others.

So the lives of the captives were probably safe until the headhunters had reached their dwelling-place above the Giant Cataract. Bomba would be in time to save them, avenge them, or, at the worst, to die with them.

Several hours passed and Bomba had made remarkable progress before he stopped for a few minutes to rest and eat.

As he felt in his pouch to draw out a portion of cured meat, he made a startling discovery.

His revolver and harmonica were missing!

Bomba could scarcely believe this at first, nor accept it as a fact until he had searched every re-



cess of his pouch and quiver. He even retraced his steps for some distance through the jungle, in the hope that his treasures might have slipped out and that he could recover them.

But he could find no trace of the magic music or the precious "fire stick," and at last he came back to the clearing to ponder and mourn his loss.

That loss to him was very great. He had so few treasures that he cherished them fondly. The harmonica had brought him soothing and comfort in many lonely hours. The revolver had been the white men's gift, and therefore doubly precious. Moreover, it was a very important part of his equipment. On occasion it might mean all the difference between life and death. His offensive power was sensibly weakened. Now he had only his knife and his bow and arrows.

But his treasures were gone, in all likelihood irrecoverably gone. Where and how had he lost them?

A thought that crossed his mind swiftly changed his mood from mourning to anger.

He remembered that Grico, he of the one eye and the split nose, had come close to him and jostled him several times, as though by accident, during his journey through the jungle. At the time, Bomba had thought it chance. Now he saw in it design. Perhaps it was Grico who had robbed him of his treasures.

Grico, to be sure, had saved his life, and for that Bomba was grateful. The fact modified the anger that assailed him. Still he vowed that, if his suspicions were correct, he would get that revolver and harmonica back. He would pay the debt he owed Grico in some other way.

He was meditating gloomily upon his loss when his attention was attracted by a slight rustling in the underbrush.

Swift as thought, he fitted an arrow to his bow and stood on the alert.

He could dimly see the form of some animal, and not knowing but what it might be a jaguar, he shot. The law of the jungle, he had learned, was to shoot first and investigate afterward.

There was a startled grunt, a floundering about in the bushes, and then silence.

Bomba crept forward cautiously, prepared for a second shot, but relaxed when he saw lying dead before him a peccary, the wild pig of the jungle.

He was not especially pleased at this, for the peccaries usually traveled in droves and companions of the dead one might be near at hand. As a rule, he gave the animals a wide berth, for nothing is more ferocious than the peccaries, whose murderous tusks, if they get to work, can tear a man into ribbons.

So he waited for a while, close to a tree up

which he could climb if the drove bore down upon him.

But none appeared, and Bomba came to the conclusion that this was a young pig that had wandered from the drove and lost its way in the jungle.

The roast pig makes delicious eating, and Bomba did not neglect the unexpected gift that had come his way. It offered an agreeable change from the dried meat on which he had expected to dine. So he cut a steak from the choicest part, roasted it over a fire of twigs, and soon was feasting on a dish that kings might envy.

How he wished that Frank Parkhurst was with him to share the feast! Before he had met with the white people he had been lonely, but he had not so keenly sensed his loneliness. Now it was ever present with him.

The friendship he had formed with Frank was the most precious thing that had so far come into Bomba's starved life—except, perhaps, the meeting with the woman of the golden hair, Frank's mother.

It had made still more deep and strong the urge that was on him to hold fellowship with his kind. For he was white—as white as Frank himself. Yet fate had thrown the two boys into environments that were as widely separated as the poles.

Chicago, Frank had called the city in which he

lived. Bomba wondered whether he would ever see that strange and wonderful city or others like it, wondered if he would always have to spend his life in the jungle, with none save Casson and a few natives for his friends, to none of whom he could speak of the longings that obsessed him, of the aspirations that seemed doomed forever to be thwarted.

He spoke to himself half aloud:

"I am not as well off as the beasts and reptiles of the jungle. They live together and have plenty of their own kind. They do not hunt and live alone as I do. The monkeys gather in flocks, the wild peccaries hunt in droves. Even the big cats, the hungry jaguars, have their companions. Why am I, Bomba, always alone? I do not belong here in the jungle, which is the only place I know. And I cannot go to the wonderful world where Frank and other boys and many people live and laugh and slap each other on the back. Where do I belong? Where is there a place for me?"

But nothing answered that desolate cry that came from the very depths of the boy's heart.

However, Bomba soon aroused himself from these unhappy musings. A certain oppression and unusual stillness in the jungle warned him that a storm was imminent. In the distance he could hear faintly the rumbling of thunder.

He girded himself and resumed his journey, his heart heavy, but his body refreshed and strengthened by the hearty meal he had eaten. For some time he had failed to pick up any direct clues of those he was pursuing. But he was now reasonably sure of the direction they had taken and pressed confidently forward.

His footsteps had been directed toward the river, since that offered the shortest route to the region of the Giant Cataract. Now, however, he struck deeper into the jungle, not caring to be caught in a raging torrent if the river should overflow its banks. He remembered how nearly he and Mrs. Parkhurst had been overwhelmed by the waters while they were escaping from the Indians, and he had no wish to repeat the experience.

He quickened his pace, leaping over many of the obstacles in his path instead of cutting his way through them. He did not want to be caught in the open during the storm that seemed to be gathering. If a wind accompanied it, there would be a rain of castanha nuts from the branches, and many of these were big and heavy enough to kill anyone they struck.

He must find shelter of some kind. He knew of the existence of a cave not far away. If he could reach this, he would be safe until the storm abated. Fortunately the tropical tempests, though fierce while they last, are not of long duration, and

Bomba knew that he would not be delayed long on his journey.

The storm was gathering with frightful rapidity. Now it was a race between the boy of the jungle and the elements. The roar of the thunder came closer. Jagged sheets of lightning shot athwart the sky. The wind tore through the jungle, shattering the ominous silence that had prevailed into jangled discords of sound.

The trees bent before that furious onslaught. Parrots, monkeys and other denizens of the jungle scurried to shelter.

The castanha nuts were ripped from their fastenings, and their thuds blended into a menacing chorus as they struck the ground.

One of these heavy missiles in falling grazed Bomba's shoulder, sending a thrill of pain through his arm.

The cave was now not far away, but the wind was pressing with terrible force against Bomba's straining muscles. Flailing, sharp-thorned vines whipped about his head, stinging, half-blinding him. His breath seemed torn from his gasping lungs, to be borne off mockingly on the wings of the terrible blasts.

Still Bomba's muscles were iron and he forged forward doggedly, ignoring the thorns that tore at him, the roots that tried to trip him up, the vines that sought to strangle him.



He was closer—closer—only a short distance now, and he would be able to drag himself into the welcome shelter of the cave.

Then, suddenly, as the tidal wave tops all other waves, came a gigantic burst of wind that bore great trees before it as though they had been toys, bending them, breaking them, uprooting them, whirling them about as in a fantastic dance.

The force of that blast bore Bomba backward, pinning him against a great tree, with all the breath knocked out of his body. At the same time there came a ripping, tearing sound, a rumble and a roar that vied with the crash of the thunder.

Something struck Bomba—he had no time to see what—swept him from the ground as though he had been a feather, and dropped him many feet away with a force that drove all consciousness from him.

## CHAPTER X

### IN DEADLY PERIL

WHEN Bomba slowly came to himself, fighting his way through unconsciousness, he did not realize at once the full significance of his plight.

First of all, he knew that he was drenching wet—probably it had been the beating of rain upon his face that had brought him back to consciousness.

The heavens had opened, and a deluge of rain had descended on the jungle, filling the dry beds of the ygapos as though by magic, overflowing the banks of the streams so that along their shores twin torrents raged.

Bomba had been swept by the branches of a falling tree into a deep hollow in the ground. The jungle abounded with these miniature pools, their bottoms only a muddy ooze at most times, the hollows only full after a rainfall or the overflowing of some stream in the vicinity.

Bomba wondered dully if he had been seriously injured, perhaps crushed, in the fall. There was no feeling in his body, and at first he was too dazed

to test his strained muscles. He seemed to himself like a disembodied ghost.

But as the rain continued to fall upon his upturned face, fuller consciousness returned to him. He viewed his situation with more active alarm, tried to move his hands and feet and raise himself from his confined position.

This effort ended in a feeling of almost complete discouragement. His feet and legs were powerless. They might have been cut from his body, for all the good they were to him. He could not even raise himself sufficiently to look and see if they were still there.

Branches of the fallen tree pinioned him as securely to the ground as though he had been bound by iron cords. There was a stifled oppressed feeling in his chest, and it hurt him to draw a long breath.

His left arm, seemed dead. It possessed no more feeling than the lower part of his body. His right arm and hand seemed numb and almost useless at the start. The arm was doubled under him, and Bomba thought it must be broken.

But, by an agonized effort that made the sweat start from his brow, he managed at last to move it, ever so slowly and painfully, drawing it by degrees from under his prostrate body, until that much of him at least was free.

The blood surged back into the numbed arm,

causing the boy unspeakable agony. But as circulation was resumed, feeling and power came back, and Bomba flexed and unflexed his fingers with a sensation of renewed life.

He was a helpless thing no longer. His right hand was clear. If he could reach the machete, drag it free and hack his way through the imprisoning branches!

But even as he groped for the machete Bomba discovered something that seemed to turn the blood in his veins to ice.

The water was rising in the pool!

Until now, this phase of his terrible danger had not struck Bomba. The painful freeing of his right hand, the fear that in the fall he might have sustained an injury that would cripple him and leave him a prey to the first beast of the jungle that might roam that way, the dread that he might never be able to free himself from those ruthless, imprisoning branches had blinded him to another and more imminent peril that threatened.

The rain was still torrential, and the pool that had been for weeks only a muddy depression in the jungle floor was now filling with water.

If he could not reach his machete with his still half-numbed right hand and hack his way free from the branches before the water rose to his mouth and nose as he lay on his back, Bomba would die—drown like a rat in a trap.

This certainty roused him at once to frantic effort. By a desperate strain, his hand found its way to the machete in his belt. The sharp-pointed twigs of the branch that imprisoned his chest tore at his flesh cruelly, but Bomba did not even feel the pain.

It was one thing to die on his feet, fighting to the last breath, and another to lie there flat on his back, while the water crept up and up, seeking to close his nostrils, fill his throat, and deprive him of life.

He had the machete now, and was hacking feebly at the nearest branch, for the strength had not yet come back into his hand and arm. He succeeded in cutting away some of it. The fragments brushed aside fell with a sickening splash into the water.

Slow work! Heart-breaking work! If only the rain would stop, the torrential downpour slacken for a while, he might yet get free. But in the lowering heavens to which Bomba lifted his anguished eyes there was no hope. It would need but a short time to fill the pool to overflowing.

The water crept higher, while Bomba slashed furiously at the confining branches. Steadily, sections of them came away and dropped into the muddy water—but not fast enough!

The chill of the rising waters was about his shoulders now. When his neck tired of holding

his head above the surface, he could feel the clammy touch upon his ear.

He had cleared away much of that network of branches. The weight on his chest was lighter. He could breathe more freely.

He tried to lift himself, but could not. That dreadful incubus still held him securely.

Chilled to the bone, shivering, he went to work again. More branches and still more were pushed aside and dropped into the pool. The lapping of the water sounded in his ears as though death were crooning its awful lullaby.

Wearied of holding up his head, his arm one agonizing ache from the effort of using it in that strained position, Bomba let himself relax for a moment and lay back gasping for breath.

Lying there, the water was over his ears, filling them with a drumming sound. It climbed still higher, as steady and implacable as fate.

He could not relax like that again without bringing the water over his eyes, over his nose——

Bomba lifted his head frantically, and, summoning his last reserve of strength, hacked at the boughs.

He would not die like that! He would not! Surely strength would be given him to resist that awful fate!

And strength was given him—the temporary strength of a madman.



He knew no fatigue, felt no pain, was conscious of nothing but the sound and touch of that lapping, creeping water.

That spasm of superhuman energy was not without result. It seemed to him that the load on his chest was lightening. Perhaps he could sit up.

One straining, frantic effort—another— He fell back, weak and gasping, into the pool.

The waters closed over him with a greedy, sucking sound and blotted out his face completely.

A trail of tiny bubbles rose to the surface.

## CHAPTER XI

### FEROCIOUS FOES

BUT Death had not yet claimed Bomba for his own.

The water broke and the lad's face appeared, ghastly drawn and white. He was not yet conquered. He would make one more supreme effort.

He drew the blessed air into his lungs. The veins stood out on his neck, the great muscles in his shoulders were ridged like whipcords as he strained to throw the last of the imprisoning branches from his chest.

If it had not been for his awful desperation, even his great strength would not have been equal to the task. As it was, there was a ripping, tearing sound, and slowly the grip of the branches relaxed, slowly Bomba forced himself upward, his face suffused with blood, his breath coming in short gasps of agony.

Then a great joy flooded his heart. The mass upon his chest yielded. He sat upright in the pool. Now he could use his shoulders as well as

his arms to free the lower part of his body. And he had escaped those greedy waters that a moment before had been sucking at his breath.

He rested for a while, for the effort had exhausted him; rested, while he drew great draughts of air into his lungs, luxuriously expanding the chest that had been so cruelly imprisoned.

He flexed his arms and felt his body carefully to make sure no bones were broken.

Everything all right there! But his legs were yet held captive, and there was no feeling in them. They might be broken, crushed. He could not tell.

He could work faster now, for the strength of his back and shoulders went into the quick, sharp strokes of the machete. One by one the boughs yielded to his vigorous attacks and were thrown aside.

The water was still creeping upward in the pool, but it would be a long time now before it could reach the danger point. The rain was slackening too.

Stealing a precious moment to glance upward at the sky, Bomba saw that the clouds were breaking and the sun beginning faintly to shine through. The wind had sunk to a gentle murmuring, and the last rumblings of the thunder were dying away in the distance.

Now a foot and leg were free. With more

heart, Bomba worked at the other, and soon cleared away the last of the branches.

He could see more clearly now what had happened to him. A great tree, torn loose by that last cyclonic burst of wind, had fallen, sweeping him along with its branches and imprisoning him in the pool.

Lucky for him, thought Bomba, that the boughs had caught him instead of the trunk. In the latter case, there would have been no escape. His life would have paid toll to the storm.

He felt of his legs, raising them tentatively and working them till the blood flowed back in their veins again. To his joy, he established the fact that no bones were broken, though ligaments and muscles had been cruelly strained.

Trying to drag himself to his feet, Bomba found that he could not bear his weight upon them, and was forced at last to drag himself on hands and knees out of the pool and onto higher ground.

The jungle was friendly again. Far above, the sun streamed out through broken clouds. Monkeys chattered, parrots screamed, and the timid small creatures once more ventured out from their hiding places.

In Bomba's heart was a great thankfulness for his escape. Yet at the same time he bemoaned the hurt to his legs, since he could not hasten as quickly

as he had hoped to the rescue of Casson, Pipina and little Pirah.

He dragged himself to his feet, slowly and painfully, resting half his weight against the trunk of a tree. He looked down at his legs and found they were torn and bleeding in a dozen places from contact with the thorny twigs. The rest of his body was badly bruised and cut. He would rub himself with river mud, his sovereign remedy, as soon as he could walk.

It took some time for the strength to return to his bruised limbs. And even when he could move and bear his weight upon them, his gait was no more than an uncertain wobble.

He was furiously impatient of this infirmity. In this condition he was as helpless as a wounded tapir. How easily he could become the prey of any beast of the jungle that might happen to come across him!

Bomba shifted his machete from his right hand to the left and felt for his bow and arrows. They were gone, torn from him, probably, as the tree fell upon him.

This was a serious loss, and his heart was filled with consternation. He made a careful search of the vicinity, but could find no trace of them.

It was another illustration of the saying that misfortunes never come singly. First he had been robbed of his revolver. Now he had lost his bow

and arrows. Only his machete was left to meet the manifold dangers by which he was surrounded and for use against the wily Nascanora and his braves. He wondered grimly how long even his machete would be left to him.

But he had to make the best of it. Perhaps he would meet some friendly natives who would trade him a bow and some arrows for the meat of the peccary. If not, he would have to shape the weapons himself with his knife, if he could find suitable material.

Meanwhile he had returned to the pool. There, scooping up great handfuls of mud, he rubbed it over his torn and bleeding flesh. Then, impatient of further delay, he started off through the jungle in the direction of the Giant Cataract.

He realized at last that he was very hungry, and, thinking that his weakness was partly due to this, he took from his pouch some of the roasted meat and ate with a relish.

He felt refreshed after this, and proceeded at a much better pace. His limbs still pained him greatly, and he was forced to stop at frequent intervals to rest. But he was getting stronger, and his confidence was returning to him.

His chief concern was the loss of his weapons. At any moment he might be called upon to use them in defence. His knife, to be sure, was a terrible weapon at close quarters. Even at some



distance he could hurl it with great precision, as he had on the night when he had sent it whizzing through the air and buried it in the throat of the jaguar that was leaping at the white rubber hunters.

But he saved that as a last resort. His main dependence had been the bow and arrows, that might enable him to make a stand even if attacked by several enemies at the same time.

They were essential, too, in hunting game for food. But that thought just now gave him little concern. He could always find jaboty eggs in the jungle or catch fish in any stream he might encounter. And at present he was well supplied with dried meat.

If he had been superstitious, he might have thought that a malign fate had been following him ever since he set out on his journey. There was the loss of his revolver and harmonica, the enforced return to the hut when Hondura's braves had come upon him, the further loss of his bow and arrows, his submergence in the pool when the tree had trapped him.

A native would have interpreted these things as evidence that the gods frowned on his undertaking, and would have turned back. But they only increased Bomba's determination to play the game out to the end. He thrived on opposition. What were obstacles for but to be surmounted?

He traveled on for perhaps an hour. Then he came to a clearing among the dense underbrush. He welcomed this as enabling him to make more rapid progress.

Suddenly he stepped back, startled. There before him, grazing placidly beneath the heat of the tropical sun, was a great drove of peccaries, the fierce wild pigs of the jungle.

Ordinarily, Bomba would have been able to circle that grazing drove so silently and swiftly that before they had caught the scent of human presence he would have been far beyond their reach.

And that was the most intense desire in Bomba's mind at that moment! He had seen natives after the peccaries had finished with them, and shuddered at the sight. If they should get at him in the open, his life would not be worth a moment's purchase. This would be true even if he had his weapons. How much more certain would be his fate under present conditions!

But Bomba now had not as full control of his limbs as usual, and he made a slight noise as he stepped back into the forest fringe.

The peccary nearest him lifted up its wicked, blunt-nosed head and sniffed the air. Then, with a snort of rage, it turned in the direction of the sound and started straight toward Bomba. The

rest of the drove automatically followed their leader.

There was only one thing to be done. Quick as thought, Bomba leaped for the limb of the tree nearest him, swinging his body clear of the ground just as the first peccary reached the spot where he had been. The others followed with such headlong speed that many of them struck against the trunk of the tree and shook it with their impact.

Not a second too soon, thought Bomba, as he swung himself from branch to branch until he reached a fork, where he ensconced himself.

Below him at the base of the tree the peccaries were acting like things demented. They ran around and around in circles, snorting viciously and stumbling over one another in their fury.

Bomba was thankful that pigs were not like monkeys or jaguars, who were as much at home among the branches of a tree as they were on the ground.

The peccaries could not climb, and so were powerless to vent their rage on Bomba. He was safe for the present and could smile grimly as they gnashed their tusks, those terrible tusks that were like so many knives and which could so easily slash him to bits.

The boy was filled with resentment against these ferocious creatures. They could not harm him, but they were delaying him in his pursuit of

Nascanora. For all he knew, they might keep him treed for days. And in the meantime what might be happening to the captives? His heart was wrung with anguish at the thought.

An hour passed—another. Then the fury of the peccaries began to abate. They were shortsighted, and used to holding their heads down as no longer gazing at their enemy, they soon forgot they grazed. It tired them to look up. And, his existence. With the stupid peccary, out of sight was out of mind.

They began to drift away at last, moving aimlessly as though they had forgotten all about Bomba and the reason for their ferocious attack.

But Bomba's forced rest had brought renewed strength to his limbs, and he felt more like his own strong, active self.

Still the lad did not dare start his descent until all of them had vanished from sight. Then, slowly and cautiously, making as little noise as possible, he slipped downward through the heavy branches.

He had reached the lowest bough when something bade him pause.

Something was watching him from the jungle, something that he could not see but could feel!

## CHAPTER XII

### THE JAGUARS ATTACK

BOMBA became suddenly motionless, flattened against the tree as though he were a part of it.

He did not dare move even to go upward again, for fear that the hidden enemy would be tempted to come forth from its hiding place.

Bomba had not lived all his life in close contact with the beasts of the jungle for nothing. His sense of smell was almost as well developed as theirs.

Now this useful sense told him that his enemy was none other than the big jungle cat, the jaguar, the most dreaded four-footed denizen of the jungle.

And there might be more than one of these ferocious beasts. He knew that they frequently traveled in pairs. His flesh crawled as the full helplessness of his position came over him.

There he was without bow or arrow or revolver—his only weapon the machete. His position in the tree rendered him all the more helpless

against the attack of the big cats, for they could climb more swiftly than could he.

What to do? Where to turn?

There was a stealthy rustling in the bushes, but as yet Bomba could see nothing. His fingers itched for the comforting feel of his bow and arrow. He almost groaned aloud when he thought of his lost revolver, the cherished "fire stick," that at such close quarters could do deadly execution.

The faint rustling drew closer and closer. From the corner of his eye Bomba glimpsed a gleaming yellowish-brown body. Beyond this he could see the dim outline of another.

Two of them! And what chance would he have even against one?

Sensing his helplessness, the jaguars were gaining confidence. He could see their eyes now, glowing like sparks of fire. In a moment they would abandon cover altogether and begin to climb the tree.

Bomba could no longer disguise his presence. The beasts knew that he was there.

So the boy began suddenly to swarm up through the branches. If he could crawl out upon a slender bough, so slight that it would barely hold his weight, there was a possibility that the jaguars would not dare to venture after him.

It was a frail hope, for Bomba knew that when



the jaguar's blood was up he was relentless in pursuit of his prey.

Still, Bomba hoped against hope that he at least might find a better position from which to use his machete. At any rate, it was his only chance. So he went higher, and higher, his eyes searching for a strategic position.

His movement stirred his enemies to action. They broke from cover as he began to swing himself upward. A quick glance downward showed Bomba the swift advance of the lean, hungry brutes. It would be a race between them to see which would grasp him first.

Bomba climbed like a monkey, his knife between his teeth. His progress was lightning swift, fear lending him added celerity. Below him he could hear the rustling of leaves, the crackling of small branches, as the foremost jaguar followed him.

A slender bough stretched before him. Out on this Bomba crept, feeling it sag beneath his weight and not knowing but at any moment it might break and send him to the ground.

A vicious growl behind him caused Bomba to turn suddenly on his frail perch, nearly losing his balance as he did so. His eyes searched wildly for the lithe form of his enemy among the leaves and branches.

It was not easy to discover the beast at first, for

at the lad's movement it had flattened itself against the trunk of the tree, wicked, glittering eyes alone awake and watchful.

But in a moment Bomba made out the sinuous figure just below the bough on which he had taken refuge; caught the glare of those malignant eyes full upon him.

Winding his limbs about the bending bough and gripping it powerfully with his left hand, Bomba drew the machete from his teeth and waited.

Below he could hear the second jaguar climbing swiftly, breaking off the smaller branches as it came, all stealth having been abandoned in its eagerness to share in the kill.

The branch on which Bomba sat bent suddenly and gave forth an ominous, crackling sound. The first jaguar had moved upward and had put out a tentative paw to test the strength of the branch.

Bomba's heart pounded as though it would force its way through his ribs. In a few moments now he would know whether he was to live or die. And with those relentless man-eaters on his track, the odds were all in favor of death. Even if he were able to beat off one of the beasts, the other would be on him at once and avenge its mate.

The instinct of the nearer brute told it that the bough on which Bomba rested would not support the weight of two bodies. So it chose a heavier one just below that on which the boy was perched,

and began to creep out upon it, tail switching and jaws dripping greedily.

Bomba watched its progress with the same sense of helplessness he had sometimes felt in nightmares. Death was separated from him only by feet. A few moments more and the feet would be reduced to inches.

Oh, for his bow and arrows! Oh, for the "fire stick" that would have so quickly turned the tables on his foe! They would have given him at least a chance for life. Now his chance was not one in a hundred.

The jaguar crept out still farther upon its branch, ears flattened back against its head, cruel teeth showing in a snarl of fury.

Bomba's fingers tensed about the handle of the machete and he shouted, hoping to disconcert the animal and perhaps make it lose its balance.

But this availed nothing. At the sound of Bomba's voice the great beast gave a snarl of rage and lifted its huge paw, armed with terrible claws that could strip the flesh from the lad's body.

Bomba met the vicious stroke halfway with a slash of his machete. The jaguar howled with rage and pain. The cut maddened it. With a ferocious growl it crouched to spring.

It was then that what seemed a miracle happened!

Bomba, in whose heart despair had entered and

who thought that this was his last moment on earth, saw the body of the ferocious beast leap suddenly into the air, grasp wildly at anything that promised a foothold, and then plunge downward through the branches to the ground.

"Help has come!" thought Bomba, scarcely able to believe his eyes and almost dropping the dripping machete from his hand in the agitation that possessed him. But from where and from whom?

He heard expressions of jubilation, and two dark-skinned men appeared beneath the tree.

They were bending over the lifeless cat that had been pierced through with an arrow, when a rustling among the branches and a low growl warned Bomba that the second jaguar had turned its attention to its new foes and was about to attack.

He could see the brute crouched among the branches, ready to spring upon the two men at the foot of the tree.

"Back! Back into the jungle!" he shouted.

The men had barely time to jump back before the jaguar sprang.

The great vicious ball of fur struck the ground with a thud, not ten feet away from Bomba's rescuers, and crouched to spring.

But before it could launch itself into the air two bows twanged. One shot missed, but the second

arrow caught the beast full in one gleaming, murderous eye and pierced to the brain.

The brute gave a few convulsive struggles and then straightened out beside its mate.

The situation had changed with the quickness of a kaleidoscope. The would-be killers had themselves been killed just at the moment that their victory had seemed assured.

But by whom had their death been brought about? Were these newcomers friendly or hostile to Bomba? The thought came to the boy that they might be of the party of headhunters. If so, he might have escaped death in one form to meet it in another even more terrible.

But as he hesitated, he heard their voices more clearly and recognized them. Then he waited no longer.

He slid hurriedly to the ground and came face to face with Ashati and Neram, the former slaves of Jojasta, the medicine man of the Moving Mountain!

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MAD MONKEY

ASHATI and Neram dropped to their knees before Bomba, clasping his hands and bowing their black heads before him. Neram, bending lower, took one of Bomba's sandaled feet and placed it on his neck as a sign that he was slave and Bomba master.

The heart of the lonely boy swelled at this sign of gratitude and affection. He stooped and raised the kneeling men, and made them stand on their feet before him.

"You have saved Bomba's life," he said with deep feeling. "If you had not come when you did the jaguars would have killed him. Bomba will not forget."

"Ashati and Neram would have been nothing now but bones buried in the heart of the Moving Mountain if you had not come to their help," replied Ashati, who seemed to be the spokesman for the two. "You saved them from death, and freed them from the cruel yoke of Jojasta, the medicine man. Ashati and Neram have no master



but Bomba, and will go anywhere in the jungle at the side of Bomba as his slave. Their lives belong to Bomba."

"You shall go with me wherever I go," replied Bomba. "But you shall go as my friends and not as my slaves. Bomba has nothing to offer you but friendship. If you will take that and go with him, he will be glad."

So it was settled, and with many more expressions of gratitude and devotion on the part of the ex-slaves of Jojasta, Bomba and the two men set to work to skin and quarter one of the dead jaguars that had unwittingly furnished them a feast.

While engaged in this and the building of a fire for the roasting of the best portions of the meat, Ashati and Neram imparted to Bomba news that he was anxious to hear.

In their wanderings they had noted the bands of Nascanora and his half-brother, Tocarora, heading in the direction of the Giant Cataract. This had been only two days before and not far from the place where they were now standing. From their hiding place in the brush, the slaves had seen that each party had with it a number of captives.

"Was there a white man among them?" asked Bomba eagerly.

"Yes," replied Ashati; "an old man, very thin and with white hair."

Bomba's heart leaped. Casson then was still alive! He had not succumbed to the hardships of the journey.

"Can you take Bomba to the place where you saw them and point out to him the way they were going?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Ashati. "But they must be a long way from there now, for they were going fast. And they kept looking behind them as though they thought men were coming after them."

The news set Bomba on fire with impatience to be off. Under his urging and example, the roasting of the meat was swiftly completed. He divided the food equally between the three of them. Whatever might happen to them in the future, it was certain that they would not starve.

After they had got fairly started, with Ashati as guide, toward the spot where the path of the slaves had crossed that of the savages, Bomba narrated to his companions some of his experiences since he had left the hut of Pipina.

When he came to the part that concerned the loss of his bow and arrows, Ashati insisted that the boy should take his and that he, Ashati, could do very well with his hunting knife. Besides, he would make another set of weapons at their first resting place.

Bomba would have refused, but seeing that he

could not do so without hurting the feelings of the devoted fellow, at last accepted the gift.

"It was an arrow from that bow that found the heart of the jaguar that would have sunk its claws in your flesh and ripped it from the bones," said Ashati, as he handed it over.

"Bomba has not asked you yet how it was you came just in time to save his life," said the lad.

"We hunted Bomba day and night," Ashati replied. "Our lives were yours, for you had saved them. We came on your trail in the jungle, and followed after. Ashati saw you in the tree as the jaguar lifted its paw to strike. Then Ashati prayed to the Spirit of the Jungle and shot his arrow. The Spirit made it go straight, and the jaguar died."

It was now late afternoon, and Bomba and his followers had not traveled far before the swift tropic night descended on them and forced them to rest for the night.

Bomba chafed at the necessity, though he himself was almost exhausted in mind and body by the stirring events of the day that had taxed both to the utmost.

He was up with the dawn, however, and, rousing Ashati and Neram, summoned them to share his hasty breakfast and start on the day's journey. They obeyed with willingness, though no more than half awake. Their bodies wasted

and their strength sapped by years of deprivation and torments at the hands of Jojasta could not throw off the fatigue as readily as the healthy jungle lad, whose veins were pulsing with vitality.

But Bomba's quest of Nascanora could not wait. Delay, however slight, might result in the death of his friends, if indeed they still lived. If Ashati and Neram could travel at Bomba's pace, he would be glad to have them with him, for they were companions in his loneliness and allies in case of danger.

But if they could not keep up with him, he would have to go on ahead, leaving them to join him when they could.

But once roused, they seemed as eager as himself to continue the journey. Even the prospect of an encounter with Nascanora and his braves did not deter them, as long as they were under Bomba's leadership. What they had already seen of him had led them to attribute to him almost magical power. Their anxiety to please and serve the lad in every way they could deeply touched Bomba, in whose life loyalty and service of any kind had been so sadly lacking.

They stamped out the embers of the fire they had built to keep off the jungle beasts during the night, ate of their supply of jaguar meat, and struck onward through the forest in the direction of the Giant Cataract.

The sun rose higher, and with full daylight came a fresh burst of speed on the part of Bomba. If Ashati and Neram found it hard to keep up with him, they did not murmur. They would have suffered any hardship rather than be left behind by him whom they had chosen as their master.

They traveled all day without meeting with any unusual adventure, pausing only briefly at noon to roast some jaboty eggs they found in the forest that gave a welcome variation to their meat diet.

The shadows were beginning to gather when they came at last to the spot where the paths of the slaves and the two parties of headhunters had crossed.

The trail of the Indians was cold, but it was not difficult for one so versed in woodcraft as Bomba to pick it up. There was still a little daylight remaining, and he persisted in utilizing every moment of it to gain another mile or two before he called a halt for the night.

On and on they went, although by this time they were nearly stumbling with fatigue. They were penetrating a part of the jungle that was new to Bomba. Pools, swelled by the recent rain, were frequent, some of them so deep that it was necessary to cross them by notched trunks of trees, the crude bridges of the jungle.

Crossing one of these, Ashati, wearied almost to fainting, stumbled and would have fallen had

not Bomba seized him and dragged him to the safety of the further bank.

They had gone but a few yards farther, Bomba's eyes straining to detect the faintly marked trail, when there was a thud, and on the ground before them, directly in their path, appeared a figure so grotesque in form and ugly in face that Bomba took a startled step backward and the two slaves fell to the ground in a fit of shuddering terror.

"The mad monkey!" chattered Neram, and then, as the creature advanced on them, uttered an ear-piercing shriek.

Gibbering and mouthing ferociously, froth slaverling from its jaws, the huge ape sprang toward Bomba and the cowering slaves.

Bomba was paralyzed at first by the hideous appearance of the beast and infected to some degree with the superstitious terror that animated Ashati and Neram. He seemed bereft of the power of movement.

Then gathering together his forces, he sprang backward swiftly and fitted an arrow to his bow.



## CHAPTER XIV

### BESET BY ENEMIES

**EVEN** as Bomba drew his arrow to its head he found that he felt a strange unwillingness to inflict injury on this antagonist.

The monkeys were his friends. Often they had helped him when other foes, much more like Bomba in form and appearance, had sought to take his life. He could not forget how the swarm of monkeys had turned the tide of battle in his fight with Nascanora and his braves when they had attacked the cabin.

So Bomba called to this slaving, hideous object in the language of the monkeys, trying to show that he was not an enemy.

But if anything, the aspect of the ape became still more fierce and threatening. It uttered a shrill cry and sprang at the lad with hairy arms outstretched to grasp him.

Ashati and Neram gave a shout of warning, and seeing that their young leader was in grave danger, conquered their fear and sprang to his help.

The bow of the jungle boy sang with a twanging sound as the arrow sped from it. But the attack of the monkey was so swift that the arrow, instead of entering the heart as Bomba had intended, pierced the flank of the brute.

With a howl of pain and rage, the great ape plucked out the arrow, and swung around upon Bomba with the bloody point of the weapon upraised.

But Bomba was quicker than the ape. He sprang aside and, drawing his machete from his belt, struck the animal's arm a blow that cut deep and caused the blood to spurt into the distorted face of his assailant.

The arrow dropped clattering to the ground, and with a weird and terrible howl the ape swung itself with its uninjured arm into the branches of a tree and vanished into the depths of the jungle.

Trembling, Ashati and Neram faced Bomba in that uncanny twilight. For a while they said nothing, but stood staring solemnly at each other.

It was Bomba who first broke the silence, and in the deep stillness of the shadow-filled jungle his voice sounded hollow in his own ears.

"The mad monkey! If he is alone, all will be well. But if there are others——"

"There are others," interrupted Ashati. "One mad monkey needs but bite another, and that one too will become mad. It is in that way the evil

spirits get possession of a flock of monkeys and set loose a thousand demons upon the jungle."

"And the bite of one sets loose an evil spirit within ourselves, and we become even as the mad monkeys," said Neram, his teeth chattering.

Bomba knew that he spoke truly. A kind of hydrophobia would sometimes be communicated by a snake-bitten monkey to its mates, and by them to any human being that came within their reach while the epidemic was raging. He had known of whole flocks of monkeys having been decimated before the terrible disease had run its course. And at such times there was no inhabitant of the jungle to be so much feared as a mad monkey.

"We cannot stay here," said Bomba, looking about him. "We must go on. Perhaps we shall find shelter, a cave or an abandoned hut of a caboclo, where we can spend the night and leave this terrible place with the daylight."

"Yes, we must go on," agreed Ashati, and Neram nodded his head in agreement. "To stay here would be to bring that hurt monkey back for his revenge."

"With good fortune we may escape the notice of others of the flock, since it is night and they may sleep," suggested Neram.

"Then we must make no more noise than the foot of the jaguar," warned Bomba, and, turning,

he sped silently and swiftly from the place, followed closely by his companions.

They had proceeded only a short distance when a horrible chattering overhead caused them to look up, and in the branches of a tree they saw two big apes gibbering and grinning at them, with the same awful look in their eyes that had marked the first one they had encountered.

As the little party moved swiftly on, a large castanha nut struck Ashati on the shoulder with such force that he was felled to the ground.

Bomba lifted him to his feet and hurried him onward just as a bombardment of the heavy missiles came pelting down. A hideous wailing and a sharp, crackling sound like a crazy laugh followed the three fugitives as they raced onward.

By this time, superstitious terror had taken complete possession of Ashati and Neram, and Bomba himself could feel the hair rising on his head. The swift-falling darkness, the knowledge that danger was all about them, that insane enemies were skulking perhaps behind a tree, leering at them from branches overhead, crouching in ambush behind a concealing bush or shrub, at any moment to reach out a hairy arm—all these things combined to fill them with terror.

Their flight was unreasoning. They plunged through thorn bushes that tore at their flesh, and felt no pain. They stumbled and fell into black

ooze that might hold writhing snakes, and scarcely thought of it. To put distance between themselves and this nightmare became their only aim.

Once a terrible figure dropped upon the neck of Ashati from the branches above. The native gave a dreadful shriek and threw himself upon his face.

The mad beast catapulted from the shoulders of Ashati and fell at the feet of Bomba. It was the work of a moment for the lad to sink his machete to the handle into the hairy body. The thing crouched as though to spring, then gave a ghastly screech and sprawled upon the ground.

"He is dead?" asked Neram, coming forward, unbelieving.

At the words, the prostrate Ashati raised himself on hands and knees and crawled over to where the lifeless brute was lying.

"Dead!" he gasped, and dragging himself to his feet stared hard at Bomba.

For it was a superstition among the natives that a mad creature was possessed of an evil spirit that made it immune to death. The fact then that Bomba had killed one of the mad monkeys so easily filled them with surprise and hope. If he had killed one, he might kill many. Their weapons were not as powerless as they had feared.

But their relief was swiftly changed to fear by a strange, weird rustling among the trees that swelled in volume as they listened, as though a

great storm had entered the jungle and was sweeping all before it. But there was no storm nor sign of one.

"The mad monkeys!" whispered Bomba. "They have told each other that we are here. They know that we are few and they are many. Come!"

If their flight had betrayed panic earlier, it was nothing to the fear that now gave wings to their feet. They might hold their own against a few. They could not face an army, such as, from the sounds, now seemed to be in pursuit of them.

But even then Bomba had no hate against his pursuers, such as he felt toward jaguars and snakes. He pitied them as the suffering victims of a terrible disorder. None the less, he knew that they were bent on taking his life and that if it came to a combat it was a case of kill or be killed.

There was but one hope, and that a slender one; the hope that they might find some cave or other shelter in which they could barricade themselves and hold the maddened animals at bay. He knew of no such place in that vicinity, and even if he had, it would have been difficult to find it in the dark.

Ashati and Neram, with what breath they had, were muttering prayers to the Spirit of the Jungle. If ever help was needed, it was needed then.



Onward they plunged through the black night of the jungle, that terrible rustling as of a mighty wind coming closer and closer with every moment.

As the pursuing monkeys drew closer to their prey, they began to howl and jabber horribly. It seemed to Bomba that the whole jungle was one hideous jangle of sound.

Neram screamed. A hairy arm had reached from a low-hanging branch, encircling his neck. He struck at it with his knife and stumbled after Bomba and Ashati.

They were panting, spent. In another moment that awful swarm of maddened beasts would descend upon them.

Stumbling blindly on, Bomba felt his foot slip into a hollow at the same time that his body struck violently against a hard substance.

He stretched out his hands and felt rather than saw in the darkness that he had come to the entrance of a cave.

"Quick!" he gasped, stepping back and nearly falling over the cowering form of Neram. "Into the cave! Quick!"

## CHAPTER XV

### LYING IN AMBUSH

THE two slaves seemed not to hear Bomba.

Perhaps they were half dead from fright, or perhaps they thought that the malady that had attacked the monkeys had disordered Bomba's mind as well.

Despite his command, they continued to crouch stupidly close to the ground, striving to keep out of reach of the clutching hands that swung from the branches overhead.

One great ape dropped to the ground and came swiftly toward them on all fours, uttering howl after howl, so wild and eerie that it froze the blood in the veins of the adventurers.

Finding that the slaves were too terrified to heed his orders, Bomba seized Neram, who was nearer to him, and flung him bodily through the opening of the cave. He took Ashati by the arm and dragged him forward, shouting:

"The cave! The cave! Do you hear what I say? Get inside quick, and I will follow."

From inside the cave Neram reached out a hand

and drew Ashati within the sheltering blackness.

As Bomba was about to follow, the monkeys, following the leadership of the great ape that had begun the actual attack, dropped to the ground and swarmed toward Bomba.

The boy leaped for the gaping mouth of the cave just as the first of the monkeys grazed his arm with its paw.

Neram and Ashati dragged him further into the depths of the cavern, while, with a shriek of rage, the baffled monkey, seeking to follow, dashed instead into the rock surface at the side.

Bomba stubbed his foot, bruising it as he fell forward into the cave. He stooped down to examine the object and found that it was a great rock.

"Come, help me!" he cried to the two slaves, who were fully awake now to the fact that there was hope of escape.

They stooped to aid him, and as the monkeys recovered from their surprise at the sudden disappearance of their enemies and began to search out the entrance to the cave, those within rolled the great stone to the entrance, fairly blocking it.

While they held that stone in place they were safe.

Bomba and his companions sank down on the ground, gasping for breath, and pressed their weight against the rock.

The weird howling of the enraged monkeys outside their shelter made them tremble even now, lest their cunning foes should find some other entrance to the cave and come pouring in to indulge in massacre.

But as time passed and they remained unmolested in their retreat, while the awful howling of the monkeys died down to a mere jumble of sound, they began to take courage and hope that all would still be well with them.

Bomba had feared at first that the cave might be the lair of some wild beast of the jungle.

But the fact that the stone was so near the mouth of the cave and was evidently intended to block up the entrance seemed to argue human occupation. Some native, perhaps, had become an outlaw from his tribe and had chosen the cave as his home.

When it became certain that the monkeys had tired of their quest and were straggling off again into the jungle, Bomba ventured to make a cautious tour of the cave to make sure that his guess had been correct.

Even then he was afraid that at any moment his fingers might touch something warm and alive but not human.

However, the cave was a small one, and he soon found, to his great relief, that, save for Ashati, Neram and himself, it was unoccupied.

Tired beyond words, but jubilant at their escape, Bomba returned to the two, who still squatted on the ground close to the stone that guarded the entrance to the cave.

Ashati was inclined to indulge in prophecy.

"The Spirit of the Jungle is good," he stated, as Bomba threw himself down beside them. "Twice it has saved the life of Bomba. The captives of the wicked Nascanora and his half-brother Tocarora will be spared. Bomba will live to seek out Sobrinini, and find from her the secret that the poor old white man cannot tell. It is for that that the Spirit of the Jungle has twice saved the life of Bomba."

"Ahma," said Neram, which meant "so be it," as he bowed his head reverently.

It was not long before all three were asleep, stretched on the ground against the great rock, so that the slightest push on it would be certain to rouse them.

But they were undisturbed all through the long hours of the night, and at dawn awoke, refreshed and ravenous for the great chunks of roasted jaguar meat they had prepared the day before.

They ate quickly, listening meanwhile for any sounds from the jungle which might warn them of a further attack on the part of the mad monkeys.

But, aside from the ordinary jungle noises, everything was as quiet as they could wish. Unless they were still slyly watched by their enemies, their escape from the cave should be a matter of no great difficulty.

Nevertheless, both Neram and Ashati were reluctant to leave the friendly shelter of the cave, and urged that Bomba rest there another day and night until all danger should be gone.

But Bomba would not listen to this.

"You stay," he said. "But Bomba must go. If, as you say, it was the Spirit of the Jungle that twice saved his life yesterday, the Spirit might be angry if Bomba were afraid and perhaps the next time would not save him from the hairy arm of the great ape or the sharp claws of the jaguar. No, Bomba must go."

So, seeing that he was in earnest and thinking that if the lad were under the protection of the Spirit of the Jungle they would be also, Neram and Ashati said nothing more and helped Bomba roll the great stone from the entrance to the cave.

"Where you go we will go," said Ashati gently, as the welcome sunlight streamed in. "Though you will not have us for your slaves, you are our master. Let Bomba start and we will follow."

Making no sound, they went swiftly through the jungle and did not pause or stop to rest until they had put a great distance between them and



the scene of the fantastic nightmare adventure of the evening before.

When the sun was high above their heads and all the jungle seemed to fry and crackle beneath the heat of it, Bomba and his companions sat down to eat the last of the jaguar meat and some berries and nuts they had gathered by the way. Farther back they had found a stream of clear, cool water, where they had slaked their thirst.

They resumed their route and had not gone far before they heard the sound of rushing waters. The sound lent wings to Bomba's feet, and the faithful slaves kept pace with him, no matter how fast he went.

They came out soon on the banks of a river. The noise of the foaming waters had been growing louder and louder until now it smote upon their ears like thunder. A torrent of black water dashed along the river bed and leaped angrily against the rocks that studded its course, flinging a shower of spray upon Bomba and his companions where they stood at the edge of the fringe of trees that bordered the river.

"The River of Death!" muttered Ashati in hushed tones. "It is so that our people call it."

"And it is well named," said Neram, making a cabalistic sign as though to ward off evil.

"Beyond the River of Death," said Bomba in a voice of impatience, "though so far away that the

eye cannot see it, is the Giant Cataract. Come, let us be quick. Nascanora and his braves cannot be far away."

They started again, following the course of the stream. Suddenly Neram paused with his head to one side as though he were listening.

"Hark!" he said, when Bomba would have questioned him. "Someone comes."

As soon as the words had fallen from his lips, Bomba threw himself upon the ground and put his ear to it.

Instantly he was on his feet again, drawing Ashati and Neram within the shelter of the trees, which at that point were growing in great profusion.

"We will watch as silently as the jaguar watches for his prey," he hissed. "Let no one move or make a sound."

Hidden by the rank marsh grass that formed a perfect covert, the three lay motionless, not a breath betraying their hiding place.

For what seemed a long time to the intent watchers, no one appeared in sight. For all that could be seen, the jungle was free from all human presence and given over to its animal inhabitants.

Unseen himself from the bank of the river, only a few yards away, Bomba could yet have a perfect view of any living thing that might pass by. Absolutely still, as motionless as though he

were an image of stone, his eyes alone moved to show that he lived and breathed.

The faint sound of footsteps that they had heard gradually became more distinct, and at last a solitary traveler came into view. The man was an Indian, but of a tribe with which Bomba was not familiar. He was journeying swiftly when those concealed in the long grass caught their first glimpse of him, glancing again and again over his shoulder as though he feared pursuit.

Motioning to Neram and Ashati to remain silently where they were, Bomba wriggled through the underbrush as sinuously as a snake. Not a motion of the grass betrayed his presence.

Then, without a sound, as though he had risen from the heart of the earth, Bomba leaped to his feet directly in the path of the unsuspecting native.

The fellow started back and opened his mouth to yell, but before a sound could issue from it Bomba had clapped one lean, brown hand over his mouth and with the other had thrown him prone on the ground.

Kneeling on the chest of his captive, who was too paralyzed by the suddenness of the attack to make more than a feeble resistance, Bomba called softly to Ashati and Neram. As though, like Aladdin, he had conjured them by the rubbing of a lamp, they were instantly at his side.

At their unexpected appearance, the feeble re-

sistance of the native ceased altogether. He seemed to be stupefied with terror, and stared from one to the other of his captors with red and watery eyes that begged for mercy.

"We will not hurt you," said Bomba, taking his hand from his prisoner's mouth while at the same time he motioned Neram and Ashati to grasp the fellow, should he seek to break away. "Only tell us what you know and you shall go free. But lie to us," he added, with a significant motion toward his machete, "and you die!"

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE ISLAND OF SNAKES

THE native writhed and twisted, the eyes blood-shot with terror at the threat.

Ashati and Neram came a step nearer with menace in their eyes, and the captive subsided again, gasping and groaning beneath the pressure of Bomba's knee upon his chest.

"Do not kill me! Only do not kill me!" he jabbered. "I will answer you! You have only to ask."

"Then listen to me, and listen well." The fierce, impatient note was in Bomba's voice again. "Nascanora, the great chief, the chief with a black heart, is the man I want to find. Give me news of him and you shall go free."

A gleam of hope came into the prisoner's eyes.

"Yes, yes, I will tell. I will tell you anything I know. But you must not let Nascanora know that I have told, or he will cut my heart and fry it over a fire."

"Nascanora shall not know," broke in Bomba,

as he lightened somewhat his pressure on the man's chest and bored him through and through with his eyes as though to wrench the truth from him. "But if you speak with a forked tongue your place will be with the dead."

"I will make straight talk," asseverated the native. "I do not want to die."

"Where is Nascanora? Quick!" demanded Bomba.

"In two days' time," replied the trembling native, "he will pass this spot on the other side of the river."

"I thought he had already passed," said Bomba.

"He has," returned the native. "But he turned back to burn another village and take some more captives. He will move slowly, for he has other enemies that he wants to capture near Snake Island, where lives the old witch, Sobrinini——"

Bomba cried out in astonishment and quick hope.

"You know Sobrinini?" he asked eagerly.

The native marked his change of tone, and seemed encouraged by it. His terror abated, and he spoke so swiftly that the words stumbled over each other and Bomba could scarcely make out what he said.

"I know of Sobrinini. Who does not know of her who lives near the Giant Cataract?" he cried. "But I do not go near her island, for it is full of



snakes and Sobrinini is a woman of evil whose frown means death."

"Where is this island?" Bomba asked in a fever of eagerness.

"It is called Snake Island. But to go there is to die."

The native shivered with a superstitious terror as he spoke the words.

Bomba glanced at Ashati and Neram, who had been listening with absorbed interest to the story of the native and on whose faces was reflected the same look of fright.

Bomba released his hold upon the prisoner and arose to his feet.

"There are two things I must know," he said.

"Command, and you shall be obeyed," returned the native humbly.

"Was there a white man among Nascanora's captives?"

"I cannot say. He had many captives and he will return as I have said. That is all that the jungle has told me."

"How do you go to this island where the witch woman, Sobrinini, lives with her snakes?" asked Bomba, feeling that the native had spoken the truth.

The native looked at him with curiosity dawning in his reddened eyes.

"You will not go there?" he cried in horror. "I tell you it would be better for you to go to the giant anaconda and let him wind his coils about your body than to seek out Sobrinini on her island that lies under the curse of the gods. I tell you again that to go there is to die."

"That is for me to say," replied Bomba. "I do not fear Sobrinini. I do not fear her snakes. I have come a far way to see her and I will see her. Tell me what I want to know. Bomba does not like to ask a thing twice."

In response to this imperative demand, the native jabbered out directions, telling Bomba the course he must take to reach Snake Island if he did not wish to be swept to destruction by the rapids of the River of Death.

When Bomba had extracted all the information he could, he motioned the native to rise to his feet.

"Listen!" he said. "If I were Nascanora I would kill you, so as to be sure that your tongue would be still. But Bomba's heart is not black like that of the chief of the headhunters. I am going to let you go free. But if you tell anyone that you have seen me you will find that Bomba's knife is sharp and his vengeance is swift. Go now and remember what I say."

After the man had disappeared, Bomba wasted little time in discussing the matter with his com-

panions. For if he were to accomplish all he hoped to before Nascanora should pass that way, he would have to work hard and fast.

He was in a ferment of eagerness to visit Sobrinini and wrest from the strange woman the secret of his birth. He was sure she knew. Jojasta had said she could tell him. Casson's queer actions when the name of Sobrinini had been mentioned and his statement that "Nini would know" had further confirmed his conviction.

As for the terrors that, according to the native, barred access to her, he cared not at all. He was used to meeting and overcoming danger. He would face anything rather than once more be balked in learning what to him was almost as much as life itself.

With the aid of Neram and Ashati, he cut down one of the smaller trees near the river bank and began the work of hollowing out a portion of the trunk in the form of a small canoe.

It was hard work and slow, even with the aid of his companions, who were skilled in that kind of work, and when the evening shadows fell along the banks of the River of Death the canoe was only half done. Impatient as he was, Bomba was forced to wait till morning for the completion of the work.

At the break of dawn Bomba was at work again. Ashati helped him, while Neram went off in search

of jaboty eggs so that they could conserve their remaining supply of meat.

Some time later he returned, triumphantly displaying six large eggs.

"There were more there, but I could not carry them," he said, as he built a fire with which to prepare breakfast. "I saw a tapir, too, but could not kill him because I had gone out without my bow and arrows."

"Foolish one to hunt without weapons," reproved Ashati, looking up for a moment from his work. "Ashati would know better."

"The next time Ashati shall do the hunting," returned Neram, and went on stolidly with his preparations.

By the time the sun was high in the heavens the crude canoe was finished. A paddle was then fashioned from a sapling, that for all its slenderness was strong enough to breast the current of even that raging river.

Their temporary captive had explained to Bomba that he must launch his boat at some little distance up the river, where the current was not so strong. From there he could let himself go with the rushing waters until he came to a place where the waters widened out and were not so tumultuous.

When he reached this portion of the stream,

the native had said, he would see at a distance a long island, the shape of a finger, extending into the river. After he had reached and passed this on the eastern side, he would find himself in a place more easily navigable for his small craft.

Up this calmer stretch of water Bomba had been directed to paddle until he should come in sight of Snake Island, half hidden behind a jutting point of the mainland.

Bomba had taken it for granted that Ashati and Neram would accompany him. There was room for the three of them, and there would be less danger of capsizing if the canoe were well weighted down.

But though they helped him willingly to carry the canoe to the portion of the river where it would be safe to launch it, they seemed so terrified when Bomba spoke of his eagerness to reach Snake Island that the lad stared at them with amazement.

"You are afraid to go?" he asked.

Poor Ashati and Neram flinched before his accusing gaze and hung down their heads. For a long moment there was silence, and then Ashati answered:

"This Sobrinini is a witch and her island is full of snakes. If she is a witch, she can make the snakes do her bidding. Did not the caboclo say that to go there was to die?"

Bomba pondered for a while, staring at his companions. He had not their superstition, but he could put himself in their places and understand their feelings.

"You have not the reason to seek out Sobrinini that I have," he conceded. "Perhaps that is what makes me blind to dangers that you see. Bomba will go alone. You stay here till I get back."

At this they cast themselves at his feet, crying out that they would go with him in spite of their dread of Sobrinini and her island of snakes.

But Bomba would not accept such a sacrifice on their part, and persisted in setting off alone.

They dropped the canoe into the water, and almost before Bomba had time to get into it the current caught the frail bark and sent it dancing out upon the swirling waters like a feather caught in the wind.

The jungle boy needed all his skill to keep the tossing craft on an even keel and set a straight course down the river. When he could at last look back, he could see Neram and Ashati standing on the bank like bronzed statues, looking after him. He knew that in their hearts they never expected to see him again.

On he went down the river, the canoe caught now by one current, now by another, sometimes dipping to one side at so sharp an angle that it seemed it must capsize, then righting itself and



dancing on again over the frothing black water—a frail barrier between Bomba and destruction.

Once the canoe was caught in the iron grip of a cross-current and rushed at a furious speed toward the rocks that at that point lined the shore.

Bomba had need of all his strength. Putting all his force upon the paddle, he grazed the murderous rocks by the fraction of an inch, and slid lightly, gently into a stretch of calmer water.

The most dangerous part of his water journey was now over. All he had to do now was to avoid the rocks that at places pushed their heads above the water and the snags formed by parts of the trunks of trees that had grown on what was dry ground before the stream had extended its borders and swallowed them up.

But there were other “snags” too—living snags! The rough, gnarled bodies of great alligators that swam or floated lazily about, their backs just showing above the surface. Many were wholly or half asleep, others turned red and evil eyes on the solitary boatman as he sped by. Bomba, remembering his last experience with the ferocious brutes, shuddered to think of what would happen to him if by some evil chance his canoe should be overturned.

He found the island that was shaped like a finger, and worked his craft about the further end of it, heading upstream as the native had directed.

This was more tedious work than his progress downstream had been, but far less perilous. Bomba paddled with a will, his heart beating high with hope as he thought that every stroke was bringing him nearer to Sobrinini and the secret whose answer he was so eager to know.

If he shared to some extent the fears that had taken such strong possession of Ashati and Neram in regard to Sobrinini and her island of snakes, his eagerness to learn from the lips of the old witch woman those facts about his parentage that had been so long denied him drove all other feelings from his mind.

But as time passed and still each bend of the river failed to disclose any island answering to the description given by the native, Bomba became anxious and quickened the long, sweeping strokes of his paddle.

Could the native have deceived him? Was the fellow chuckling at that very moment at the way he had deceived the white boy who had waylaid him?

Bomba hardly thought so. The man had spoken under the fear of death, if he spoke falsely. He knew how indefinite was the native idea of distance. He had heard Casson say in the old days that when a caboclo said a place was "not far" he might mean just beyond a bend of the road or twenty miles away.

Bomba's first uneasiness came with the lengthening of the evening shadows. Even if the native had not misled him and his course was the true one, Bomba did not relish the idea of approaching the island in the dark, or even at early dusk.

But even as these thoughts troubled his mind and the shadows grew deeper, he rounded another bend of the river and saw before him the object of his search. He could not be mistaken. The position and shape of the island were exactly as the native had described them.

As Bomba, with quickened pulse, drove his canoe among the heavy rushes that half concealed the land from any one upon the river, the sound of singing came to him.

It was not one of the tribal songs of natives with which he was familiar.

It was singing such as he had never heard before, and the voice of the singer was so thin and eerie and unearthly in that solitary spot that Bomba felt the hair rise on his scalp.

"Sobrinini!" muttered the lad, and with a trembling hand parted the bushes from before his eyes.

## CHAPTER XVII

### AMID WRITHING SERPENTS

THE sight that met Bomba's eyes was horrible beyond anything he had ever seen or imagined.

At the extreme end of the island, in mud that oozed about her ankles, an old withered crone was performing a weird dance, singing to herself as she did so in a language that was strange to Bomba.

But that was not the part of the performance that held Bomba spellbound, horror-stricken.

It was the snakes, the ropes of slimy, hideous reptiles that the old woman wound about her arms, her waist, her neck, even her face, as she danced faster and ever faster to the strains of her weird, high-pitched song.

It was then that fear entered into Bomba, a fear such as had never been felt by him when he battled with the wild beasts of the jungle. Then he had fought with things of flesh and blood, with something he could understand. But what he saw now seemed to be tinged by the supernatural.

His flesh crawled. The scene was revolting and horrible beyond description.

This must be Sobrinini, this hag that played with and fondled and petted these hissing reptiles that wound their coils about her body. She must be a witch, as the native had claimed. How otherwise could she do a thing like this and remain unharmed?

And if she was a witch—and to Bomba's primitive, half-taught mind this did not seem at all impossible—she might have it within her power to lay a spell upon him, if she wished. Perhaps she might turn him into one of those very snakes that hissed and writhed about her.

At the thought, Bomba was tempted to flee from the spot. But something in him, stronger even than his fear, drew him resistlessly toward that weird figure on the river bank.

He worked the canoe in as far toward the island as he dared and wedged it tightly among the rushes, trusting that they would hold it for him until he returned.

He found that the water was shallow, and silently slipped into it and waded toward the bank. Dread of the piranhas, a dangerous, sharp-toothed fish, such as infest all the waters of the jungle, hurried Bomba's steps so that he was not as cautious in his approach to Sobrinini as he would otherwise have been.

Although he made for the shore at some distance from the old woman, so that he might choose his own time for drawing near her after she had finished with the demon-like dance, he slipped, when he tried for a footing in the slimy ooze of the river bank, and came down with a heavy splash.

The sound startled Sobrinini. The weird song died on her withered lips and she stood staring. The tropic night had fallen now, but a full moon had risen, and by the light of it Bomba could be seen as he got to his feet and gained the bank.

At sight of him, a shrill yell pealed from the lips of the old woman, which brought dark figures running to her from all directions. Bomba saw one rise up in front of him as though conjured from the earth by magic. He turned to avoid the outstretched arms of this apparition, did not see the hole that yawned at his feet, and fell into a nest of writhing snakes.

He was so paralyzed with horror that he could not move. Perhaps it was to that that he owed his life. For as the snakes, most of which had been dozing in the slimy ooze at the bottom of the pit, recovered from their surprise and coiled to attack, Sobrinini pushed through the crowd at the edge of the hole and began to sing.

It was a lilting, rhythmic tune, and at the first



notes of it the hideous reptiles surrounding Bomba began to sway to the sound and one after another slipped over the edge of the pit and slithered away into the darkness.

Bomba climbed out, with the gray mud plastered over him. Still shaken at the narrowness of his escape from a terrible death, the lad drew himself up beside Sobrinini.

The ring of natives, male and female, closed in upon Bomba and the old witch woman as the sound died on the lips of Sobrinini. Several of the group carried flaring torches, and by this flickering light the scene seemed as unreal and fantastic as a dream.

As Sobrinini saw Bomba before her, she turned upon him with a look so fierce and malignant that the lad involuntarily drew away from her.

"You scared my snakes!" she cried accusingly. "For that you should be burned by fire and flung into the river for the alligators to feast on your flesh. It was for their sakes, not yours, that I saved your life, wicked one. My snakes must not be frightened, my little pets—ha, ha, ha!" and she went off into such a fit of horrible merriment that Bomba's heart froze within him.

If at that moment he could have reached his canoe by any means and left that fearful place behind him forever, he might have yielded to the temptation.

But it was too late now. The ring of natives surrounded him, and even if he succeeded by a bold dash in forcing his way through them, there was little chance of escape. They would reach him and drag him back before he could get the canoe clear of the bushes and head for the open stream.

The impulse to flee lasted but a moment. The next, Bomba pulled himself together and was his cool, courageous self once more.

Sobrinini had worked herself into a frenzy of fury. She danced about Bomba in a hideous way, shaking her shriveled fists in the air and mouthing horribly.

Now she came close to the lad and pushed her wrinkled face in his. She raised an arm above her head as though to strike him. Bomba stood unflinching.

She paused suddenly, arrested apparently by something she saw in his face.

"Ah!" she cried. "Bring the torches nearer."

The command rang out in a strikingly clear voice and instantly there was a stir among the natives. Evidently she was accustomed to being obeyed without question.

One great sullen fellow came forward and thrust his flaring torch almost in Bomba's face.

Sobrinini peered closely at the lad for a moment, and then shrank back with a piercing scream.

"You!" she cried, again coming close and star-

ing at him wildly. "How came you here? Are you a ghost, Bartow?"

Into Bomba's heart came a swift feeling of amazement.

What was the meaning of this? Like an echo of the words came the memory of Jojasta's cry as Bomba had bent above him when he was pinned beneath the fallen column. Jojasta had called him Bartow and thought he was a ghost.

He took a step toward Sobrinini, who was still staring at him fearfully.

"What mean you?" he cried.

Seeing the terror into which their priestess had been thrown, a strange wild singing rose from the native women as they wove in and out in fantastic mazes, evidently designed to ward off the evil portent.

The bony fingers of Sobrinini closed on Bomba's arm. Her voice was shrill and urgent, as she said in his ear:

"Come with me, Bartow. Ghost or not, come with Sobrinini."

As in a nightmare, his mind in a tumult of conflicting emotions, Bomba allowed himself to be led away.

They passed through dank, long grass that sprang from the marshy ground, and in some places grew as high as Bomba's head. Once he felt the slimy body of a snake beneath his foot

and leaped aside, only to feel his foot brush another.

"Be not afraid of the snakes. They are my pets and will not harm anyone that is with Sobrinini," crooned the old crone at his side.

She knew her way well, for she moved along the winding trail without ever looking down, keeping her fascinated gaze on Bomba's face.

Twice Bomba started to ask her what she meant by calling him Bartow and a ghost, but twice he was halted by a bony, shriveled finger on his lips and a croaking cry:

"Hush! Speak not, Bartow, or you will break the spell and shatter it into a thousand tinkling fragments."

She went on, muttering to herself, until at last they came to a large wooden building. A flickering light from its gaping windows threw grotesque shadows upon the ground.

Bomba felt a dread of entering the place. Like the wild things of the jungle, he felt safer in the open. But Sobrinini's hand was upon his arm, and she dragged him through the doorway. Her manner grew ever more feverish and wild. She seemed possessed by a terrible excitement. Bomba did not venture to dispute her will.

He found himself in a strange place, the like of which he had never seen before. Tearing his

glance from the withered mask that was the face of Sobrinini, he looked about him.

Torches flickered and flared in crude receptacles fastened to the walls and lighted up the bare and desolate room.

Rows of crude chairs stood upon the uneven wooden floor, and above these, halfway to the patched and leaking roof, a tiny balcony had been constructed. At either end of this was a small compartment with rounded front, meant to represent an opera box, though this of course Bomba could not know.

At the extreme front of the big room was a raised platform, meant to serve as a stage of this dismal imitation of an opera house.

As Bomba gazed about him, surprised and bewildered, Sobrinini left his side, and with a horrid simulation of youth skipped to the platform.

Then she turned and made him a low bow, a hideous smirk cracking the wrinkles of her withered face.

"Come closer, Bartow. Come closer, dear Bartow! Do!" she urged, in a voice at first soft and coaxing, but that ended in a shrill cackle. "I will give you a good seat, Bartow—the best seat in the house—in the first row center. You can hear me better there than from a box. Come!" she cried, as he hesitated, her simpering giving place to a terrible frown. "Why do you stand

there blinking at me like a fool? Do not rouse my wrath, Bartow! The wrath of Sobrinini is a terrible thing, as no one should know better than you."

Bomba came forward quickly, alarmed by the swift change in the old crone's manner. But she simpered and smirked again when he approached, and, skipping lightly from the platform, forced him with a playfulness that Bomba found scarcely less terrifying than her wrath into one of the crazy chairs close to the stage.

"Now I will sing to you!" she cried, and sprang up again upon the platform.

Bomba watched with a strange fascination while the old woman danced and sang in a strange language unknown to him. The lilting songs, even when sung by that cracked and ruined voice, struck a responsive chord in the boy and filled him with emotions that he could neither analyze nor understand.

He did not know that that voice, when in its prime, had thrilled great audiences that included emperors and kings and had given the singer a reputation as wide as the civilized world.

Suddenly Sobrinini paused, and fixing Bomba with a strange intent gaze, sang in a voice that had magically lost most of its raucous quality and for the moment had become the faint, sad echo of something that had been supremely beautiful—



sang a tender, haunting melody that touched some almost forgotten memory in Bomba's heart and filled him with an exquisite pain.

Somewhere, long since, he had heard that melody! But when and where?

Slowly the music drew him step by step toward that fantastic figure on the stage.

"Tell me!" he cried imploringly. "Tell me, Sobrinini, was that my mother's song?"

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE MYSTERY DEEPENS

FOR an instant the fierce, bright eyes of the old hag softened. Her bony fingers hovered over Bomba's hair, as though they would have stroked it.

Then she threw back her head and laughed, a harsh, cackling laugh that caused Bomba to wince and shrink back as from the sharp thrust of a knife.

"Eh, Bartow, you would have a joke with Sobrinini, my fine one," croaked the old crone, wagging her finger in Bomba's face and leering at him in a way she meant to be facetious. "No, no, Bartow—or Bartow's ghost—that was not your mother's song, but the song of your wife——"

"My wife!" the words broke from Bomba impetuously. "What mean you, Sobrinini?"

"Ah, you would still have your joke with Sobrinini, eh?" The old woman leaned forward again and tapped him on the arm with her skinny finger. "But you cannot forget that song, Bartow, the song your wife sang after Bonny was born."

But when Bomba would have questioned her further, she pushed him away from her and began to sing again.

"La la la! la la la!" she sang.

It was the gay and vibrant melody that poor Casson had tried to sing.

Bomba could do nothing but stand in bewildered silence and watch the old woman as she danced and sang, whirling about the poor stage with a nimbleness that was amazing in one of her age.

Confusedly, he tried to think of the things she had said to him, but beneath the wild spell of that performance he could reason nothing out, and could only stare dazedly at this wreck of what had once been a great genius.

What would happen to him, Bomba wondered, when the woman tired of dancing and perhaps found out that he was not Bartow or Bartow's ghost as she thought him then, but only Bomba, a boy of the jungle.

With one last twirl and a deep bow to an imaginary audience, Sobrinini brought her weird performance to an end. She grinned toothlessly at the staring boy, and skipped lightly to the edge of the platform.

"Ha, Bartow, like you Sobrinini in the dance that charmed all Paris?" she chirped, patting Bomba's shoulder coquettishly. "Sobrinini has not lost her art. How say you, Bartow?"

Bomba felt that he must keep her in good humor with him if he were to gain that information about himself for which he had risked so much. He had already learned something—or guessed something. Perhaps he could learn more.

"I like your dance," he told her gravely. "But I like best the song that Bartow's wife sang when——when——"

"When Bonny was born?" prompted the old woman, and without waiting for a reply began to hum again that tender melody that had found its way to the depths of Bomba's heart.

It thrilled the boy again more strangely than before. When the song was done, emotion conquered Bomba's caution, and he flung out his hands to Sobrinini, begging her to tell him what she knew about Bartow, about Bartow's wife, about the child that she had called Bonny.

But Sobrinini drew back from him, quick suspicion glinting in her eyes.

"No, no! Not now, Bartow, not now! It is another joke that you play on Sobrinini. No, no! To-night you will sleep here and to-morrow I will pay back your jokes with some of my own. Come! I will show you where you are to sleep."

So saying, and mumbling to herself as she had before, the demented woman led him out of the strange room with the chairs and platform that

had so bewildered the boy and down a long, dark passage.

There Sobrinini paused and clapped her hands sharply.

As though by magic, a figure appeared out of the darkness before them.

"A torch!" croaked Sobrinini. "A torch to drive the shadows back into the night. Bring a torch. Make haste."

The figure disappeared and in a few seconds returned with a light. The features of the slave seemed savage and sinister in the flickering illumination.

"Give it to me! Give it to me!" cried Sobrinini irritably. "Now, slave, begone!"

Instantly the figure vanished again, and Bomba looked about him apprehensively. For a moment he had the fantastic notion that the shadows all about him were filled with ghostly figures that appeared and disappeared by magic and made no noise.

But Sobrinini stalked before him, flaring torch in hand. Bomba followed her into a room so small that the farthest corners were made bright by the wavering light of the torch.

As Bomba entered the place he had a strange feeling that he had seen it before, had been in it before, had once looked about him as he was now

looking at the few articles of furniture and the pictures on the walls.

But even while he felt this so strongly that it seemed almost uncanny, Bomba knew that it could not be so and that it was impossible he had ever enacted this scene or anything like it before.

In all his wild life in the jungle, he had never seen anything like that strange object in one corner of the room, raised from the floor by posts and covered with a cloth. If Bomba had been told that the strange object was a bed, he would have been no better informed than before. As far as he could remember, he had never slept in anything like that in his life.

While he was taking in the various features of the room, Sobrinini deposited the torch in a socket on the wall and turned again to Bomba.

"Bartow," she said, and there was that softened light in her wild eyes that had appeared there while she was singing the tender lullaby that Bartow's wife had crooned to Bonny, "this is where you sleep while you remain with Sobrinini on her island. Good-night, Bartow, or Bartow's ghost, and pleasant dreams!"

Then she turned and, noiselessly as a ghost or a shadow, glided from the room.

Bomba stood where she had left him, motionless.

What was that strange feeling that made his



heart swell within him until he could not bear the pain of it, that made him reach out wildly, beseechingly, for some vague, beautiful thing that he had never known, or only dimly remembered?

What was it that suddenly made him feel his loneliness and desolation more keenly than he had ever felt it in his life, as though he had been given for a moment a glimpse of something warm and friendly and sweet, only to have the curtain fall again and leave him in his solitude, more utterly alone than he had ever been before?

What was it that drew him haltingly, almost fearfully, across the tiny room to stop beneath a picture on the wall and, with his hungry eyes up-raised, stare at it intently?

Bomba could not tell. He only knew that within him there was a growing tumult of emotions, fear, hope, doubt, and a longing so fierce that it was pain.

Into the jungle lad's upturned, pleading face the beautiful eyes in the picture looked steadily and gravely down. It was a lovely face, girlish and sweet, with soft hair waved back from a broad, low forehead and with eyes one knew were soft and dark. The lips turned up at the corners, half-smiling.

Bomba had never seen that beautiful pictured face before, as far as he could remember. Then how was it that those great eyes looking into his,

those sweet lips parted as though to speak to him, touched a chord in him that had never before resounded, and increased a thousandfold his longing for that vague and beautiful thing that he had never known?

She was even fairer than the woman with the golden hair. Yes, much more fair and sweet.

Suddenly Bomba's eyes were full of tears, and he heard himself crying in a voice that shook:

"Mother! Mother!"

With both hands upraised toward the beautiful face, Bomba slid slowly to the floor and lay there, his frame shaking with unaccustomed sobs.

Softly, weirdly, tenderly, there floated to the lad, as though from a great distance, the strain of that sweet melody, the song that Bartow's wife had sung to Bonny.

Long after the lullaby had died away Bomba remained there, motionless, crouched beneath the picture, one arm before his eyes.

## CHAPTER XIX

### A STARTLING INTERRUPTION

WORN out by the exciting adventures and fierce emotions of the day, Bomba fell asleep. When he awoke the chill gray of early dawn was stealing in at the window of the little room.

He was still on the floor beneath the picture. But he would not have sought the bed in any event. It represented to him something so strange that he would probably have been unable to sleep in it. The hard floor on which he now lay or the earth of the jungle or his own hammock was far more restful and sleep compelling.

At first, only half awake, Bomba had difficulty in remembering the events of the day before and why he was in the place where he found himself. He sprang to his feet, rubbed his eyes, and looked about him.

His eyes fell upon the picture of the beautiful lady, and memory returned to him.

That tender, sweet melody sung by Sobrinini! Bomba had never heard it till lately, as far as he could remember, and yet felt that he had known it

always. He wondered at the power it had exercised over him. It had tugged at his heart as though it would pull it out by the roots.

Perhaps, he thought, this was the work of Sobrinini. Was she not a witch? Certainly, everything he had witnessed since his arrival at the island tended to that conclusion. The mortal fear in which her servitors stood of her would seem to indicate the possession of some supernatural power. Had she woven a spell about him, made him seem to remember things that had never happened?

Yet this spell, if spell it was, had not been a malignant one. It had made him strangely happy. The tears that had been forced from him were tears of joy in the main, and even the melancholy that attended them had been tender and sweet.

And this emotion had been so rare in the boy's lonely life that it brought a rush of gratitude toward Sobrinini. He was not afraid of the weaver of spells and the charmer of serpents. He stood in awe of her, but the predominant feeling was of friendship and pity for her demented condition.

And there was something else that made a tie between them. She had known Bartow and Bartow's wife and Bonny. How much that name sounded like Bomba!

In the dim light of the growing dawn, Bomba

came close to the beautiful pictured face on the wall and studied it wistfully. He could see love in those eyes as they looked at him. He would ask Sobrinini for that picture. Perhaps she would give it to him.

He dwelt on it, until every feature was engraved on his memory. From that time on, he would always be able to see that face, even when his eyes were closed.

Reluctantly at last he turned away. He had work to do, and time was pressing. He must find out from Sobrinini what he had come to learn. And then he must hurry on in pursuit of the captives of Nascanora. He must be at hand when the party passed the point in the river where Ashati and Neram were still waiting for him.

He would seek out Sobrinini at once and demand from her an answer to the questions that tormented him. He would find out who Bartow was and why he, Bomba, had twice been taken for Bartow or Bartow's ghost.

With these thoughts in mind and forgetful of the fact that he had had nothing to eat since the afternoon of the day before, Bomba strode into the passage and found his way back to the strange room with the chairs and platform where Sobrinini had sung to him.

The place looked changed to him now. It was not so weird nor mysterious now that the torches

had flickered out and dawn had replaced the shadows of the night.

If Bomba had expected to find Sobrinini there, he was disappointed. The great bare hall was deserted, and though he stopped and listened intently, there was no sign of life anywhere.

Then suddenly there came to him from a distance the sound of singing. First Sobrinini's voice—he could not be mistaken in it now—then other voices joining in a sort of weird chant that chilled the lad's blood yet drew him irresistibly toward the point from which the sound was coming.

Slowly he emerged from the building and found himself enveloped in a swirling, gray mist.

Yet the sound of the chant served him as a guide, and he went on and on, now coming closer to the singers, then seeming to draw away from them as the voices receded.

At last, when he was beginning to think that Sobrinini had again laid a spell on him and that the voices were ghostly voices, to be heard by none but himself, he saw a dark form emerge from the mist and after it another and another.

Bomba stood still and watched. The natives were dancing, flinging their arms about wildly and intoning their weird chant, now harsh and loud, now soft like the sighing of the wind through the trees.

It was like a dance of ghosts, and it was not



alone the chill damp of the air that struck cold to Bomba's heart. He felt as though he were in some other world, and that an evil one. He had never longed for the warmth and brightness of the jungle sun as he did at that moment.

But as the natives danced on, as tireless apparently as the ghosts that Bomba half-thought them, the mist began to clear and the sun struck through, causing the moisture upon the dark bodies of the dancers to glisten.

Then, in the center of the ring, Bomba beheld Sobrinini, whirling wildly in a mad dance, long, gray locks streaming about her, and in each upflung hand the head of a great snake, while the bodies of the reptiles coiled about her arms and neck.

Bomba felt a sick faintness come upon him as he watched with repulsion the loathsome sight. He stepped back a pace or two with an impulse to shut the scene away from him. But at that moment Sobrinini beheld him and called to him.

She halted in her dance, and the snakes, uncoiling themselves from about her arms and neck, as though they knew that their part in the frenzied performance was over, slithered off quietly into the long marsh grass and sought their lairs.

Sobrinini darted through the ring of breathless natives, and before Bomba had guessed her purpose threw her skinny arms about the boy's neck.

"Bartow! My Bartow!" she cried, in a loud,

cracked voice. "Come and dance with Sobrinini. Come!"

But Bomba drew back, striving to disengage himself from the clinging arms of the witch woman. If one of her own loathsome snakes had coiled about his neck, he could hardly have felt a greater repulsion.

"Come! Come, dance with Sobrinini," the woman said in a wheedling voice, as she untwined her shriveled arms to grasp him by the hand. "I will call back my snakes, and you shall fondle them to show you that they will not fill your veins with poison or crush your bones when Sobrinini is nigh. Come! Why do you draw back? What are you waiting for, Bartow?"

"But I am not Bartow," blurted out Bomba in his desperation to be rid of her and learn the truth about himself. "Jojasta, the medicine man of the Moving Mountain, called me Bartow also. But I am not he. I am Bomba! Bomba, the jungle boy!"

Sobrinini paused, a look of bewilderment overspreading her sharp features.

"Not Bartow? Not Bartow?" she mumbled, coming close to peer into the lad's face. "No, no, not Bartow, surely. But then you are Bartow's ghost."

"I am no ghost!" cried Bomba. "Bones are in my body. Blood runs through my veins. See—if you prick my flesh, it bleeds."

In his eagerness to prove to the old crone that he was human and no ghostly visitor, Bomba drew forth his machete and thrust the sharp point of it into his brown, sinewy forearm. Blood welled up from the slight cut, red, pulsing blood.

"See—I am no ghost!" cried the lad again. "Ghosts do not have blood. Ghosts do not have bones. One can walk through ghosts as one walks through the mists of the early morning. Let anyone try to walk through me, Bomba, the jungle boy!"

The natives had stopped dancing and singing their wild invocation to the dawn. Now they stood in a half circle about Sobrinini and Bomba, looking on curiously.

At Bomba's challenge, not one of them stirred. He looked exceedingly dangerous, standing in all his splendid strength with the sunlight glinting on the red point of his upraised machete. It would not be well to try to walk through him.

The puzzled expression had deepened upon the face of Sobrinini. She stood regarding Bomba with bewilderment and a dawning suspicion.

"Then if you are not Bartow and no ghost," she demanded, "who are you?"

And suddenly all the lad's long groping for the truth, his passionate eagerness to learn the facts concerning his parents, the many disappointments he had suffered and the realization of his desperate

loneliness rushed over him in an overwhelming flood, and filled him with emotion that found vent in a headlong torrent of words.

"Who am I? If I could give you the answer to that question, Sobrinini, I would not be here. I know nothing about myself except that I am Bomba, a boy of the jungle, and have spent my life with Cody Casson on the edge of the swamp. Casson could not tell me who I am nor who my father and my mother were. He sent me to Jojasta, and Jojasta before he died said, 'Go to Sobrinini, she will tell you!' I have come, Sobrinini."

He took a step toward her, hands outstretched.

At that instant there was a wild yell, and a native, panting, the sweat streaming from him, dashed toward them and flung himself at the feet of Sobrinini.

"The Great Spirit of the Jungle save us!" cried the frightened wretch, trembling as with the ague. "The headhunters have come! The great chief, Nascanora, is at hand!"

## CHAPTER XX

### IN THE HANDS OF THE HEADHUNTERS

THERE was a chorus of frightened exclamations and a wild scattering of the natives that showed the dread that Nascanora's name inspired in all the people of that region.

In a twinkling, Sobrinini and Bomba found themselves alone.

The old woman herself had grown ashen. She grasped Bomba by the hand.

"Come!" she said. "I will hide you. Quick!"

But even as she spoke there was a wild yell from the forest, and a horde of savages, headed by Nascanora himself, burst into the clearing.

Bomba had drawn his knife, determined to sell his life dearly. Seeing his threatening attitude, the savages were rushing on him with spears held high when a command from Nascanora halted them.

"Do not kill him—now," he commanded. "That would be too easy. His death, when it comes, must be hard and long. And after that

his head shall stand on the wigwam to show how Nascanora deals with his enemies."

Sobrinini stepped forward, her eyes glaring.

"Beware what you do, Nascanora," she warned. "Leave this boy alone and go your way lest I put my spell upon you. It is not well to make Sobrinini angry."

There was a murmur of uneasiness among the savages, for the fame of Sobrinini as a witch had gone far and wide. That Nascanora himself was not wholly unmoved was evident from the way he evaded the blazing eyes of the old woman.

But he was made of sterner stuff than his followers, and he had come too far to be balked of his prey.

"I would have no quarrel with Sobrinini," he said placatingly. "I do not wish to hurt her or her people. But the boy must go with me. Else I will kill all the people on this island and take their heads along for the women of my tribe to rejoice over. Nascanora has spoken!"

Before Sobrinini could speak, Bomba intervened. To fight against such odds was hopeless. Flight was equally impossible. He must submit to capture, and trust to his quick wit and courage to escape later.

"Listen, Sobrinini!" he said. "They are many, and I do not wish that your people should die. I will go with Nascanora. But first," he added,

turning to the chief, whose eyes were glowing with a baleful glare of triumph, "I would ask Nascanora a question."

"Speak!" said the chief.

"Nascanora is a great chief," said Bomba. "He is not afraid of anyone. Is it not so?"

"It is so," replied Nascanora, rather astonished at the tribute, but swelling with pride.

"Then will Nascanora fight Bomba alone?" asked the lad. "Fight him with knives?"

If a bomb had been thrown into the midst of the savages it would not have created greater surprise. They looked at each other in amazement. Was the boy mad?

The most astounded of all was Nascanora himself. He could not believe his ears. To be bearded thus, he, Nascanora, in the presence of his braves and by a boy! His eyes glowed with fury and his face grew dark with menace.

"Such idle words will make your death still harder," he threatened. "It is not well to mock Nascanora."

"I do not mock," returned Bomba quietly. "I would make a compact with Nascanora. I will fight him with knives. We can throw the knives or fight hand to hand, as Nascanora chooses. But Nascanora must swear by his gods and command his braves that, if he is killed, the captives shall



go free. It is for their freedom that I will fight Nascanora. Surely he is not afraid."

Lithe, supple, muscular, his head held high as he flung out the concluding taunt, Bomba gazed full into the glowering eyes of the chief. He hoped that Nascanora would be goaded into accepting the challenge. The boy was a master of the machete, either thrust or thrown. If he should conquer, as he felt sure he would, his victory at one stroke would free the captives. If he should lose—well, that was in the hands of fate.

Nascanora's face was a study. It was working with rage that did not hide, however, a shade of apprehension. He had tested the boy's courage on one previous occasion, and had learned to respect it. He towered over his captive in size, but he doubted whether he exceeded him in strength. And he doubted very much whether he equaled him in skill and agility.

The chief was in a quandary. He knew that his braves were looking on and wondering at his hesitation. On the other hand, life was dear to him.

He glared at Bomba. The lad looked unflinchingly at him. And in the duel of eyes, Nascanora's were the first to fall.

"It is not for a great chief like Nascanora to fight with a boy," he blustered, seeking to cover his defeat. "He shall learn what happens to

them who speak boastful words to Nascanora. Bind his hands and we will go."

The command was quickly obeyed. Sobrinini again attempted to interpose, but Bomba checked her.

"Sobrinini is good," he said, "but there is no reason why she and her people should be killed. Bomba will go, but he will come back again."

"Yes, yes," she whispered agitatedly. "You will come back. You are brave. You made Nascanora's heart turn to water. Sobrinini can see into the future. You will come back, and then I will tell you what you want to know."

Bomba would have urged her to tell him then, but he was roughly hurried away, leaving Sobrinini to wring her withered hands and mutter invocations to her gods.

Despite his dangerous plight, Bomba found himself in a strangely buoyant frame of mind. He still felt the exaltation that came from his triumph over Nascanora. He had shamed him in the eyes of his braves. Perhaps that would weaken his prestige with them and make ultimate escape easier.

He was not oblivious, of course, to the fact that his defiance had made Nascanora a more bitter enemy than ever. He watched the angry figure striding along at the head of his braves. Doubtless at this moment the chief was thinking of some

fiendish mode of torture with which to slake his thirst for revenge.

Before long they reached the part of the island where Nascanora had disembarked. Here two great war canoes were drawn up. Bomba was pushed into one of them, then the natives got in. With a few swift thrusts of the paddle the canoes were sent into the center of the stream. Then they headed their course for the mainland.

The savages were familiar with the rapids, and, evading the pitfalls of the river, rapidly neared the other shore.

As they drew closer, Bomba saw the rest of Nascanora's band camped close to the shore. In the ring they formed he could see a group of dejected figures, evidently the captives.

The canoes touched the bank. Bomba was pulled out by a couple of braves and thrust into the crowd of prisoners. His eyes flew from face to face.

They rested on the frail, tired visage of an old man who rose and tottered toward him.

"Casson!" cried Bomba.

"Bomba!" exclaimed Casson pantingly as he threw his arms about the boy's shoulders.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE GIANT CATARACT

THE old man sobbed as he hugged the lad to his breast.

Bomba's joy at the reunion was no less, though his bound hands prevented him from returning the embrace.

When at last they stood apart and looked fondly at each other, Bomba was grieved to the heart to see the ravages that the hardships and miseries of the journey had made in the face and frame of the old naturalist. The first was so thin as to be almost transparent, and the latter had wasted to a shadow.

But he was still alive. Bomba had not come too late to see him once more in the flesh. He would still have a chance of rescuing him and taking him back to the old cabin where he could end his days in peace. But the boy's heart sank as he looked at the bonds on his own wrists and realized how slight his chances were to rescue anybody while he was a captive himself.

When their first emotion had somewhat sub-

sided, Bomba had time to look about for the others that he knew. Many faces were strange to him, and it was evident that, from the headhunters' point of view, their foray had been crowned with great success. They were carrying back an unusually large number of prisoners, some to be tortured and killed, others to drag out a lifetime of misery.

Bomba's eyes lighted on Pipina, who came forward eagerly and threw her arms about his neck with an outburst of tears and broken ejaculations. Also, there was Hondura, the Araos chief, who greeted him merely with a grunt and the habitual stolidity of his race.

Then his eyes fell upon Pirah, the young daughter of Hondura, who, herself unbound, came running toward him with outstretched arms.

She clasped Bomba's hands fondly, noting sorrowfully that they were bound, and snuggled close up to him, smiling in his face. He reached down, and as she drew near, rubbed her cheek with his.

"Is Bomba glad to see Pirah?" she asked almost happily.

"Yes," answered the boy, forbearing to add that he would far rather never have seen her at all than to see her in such a position. "Pirah saved Bomba's life when he came to the village of the Araos, and Bomba will never forget,"

"But no, Bomba, you must not be glad. We are

captives," and the child's bright face clouded. "We go as slaves. You may not teach me, as you did before, to shoot the bow and arrow. Do you remember when you came to our village that you showed me how to use your bow? But now—oh, what is to become of you, of me?"

Every word the little girl uttered stabbed Bomba to the heart. She had saved his life once. She was his friend, and he had all too few friends. He shuddered to think of what might be the fate of this innocent child in the hands of the savage headhunters.

Their captors were preparing to break camp and were so busy with their packing that for the time the prisoners were left to themselves. That gave Bomba his chance to get together with Casson, Hondura and Pipina, and exchange experiences.

He learned, to his relief, that they had not been treated as harshly as he had feared. Their captors had kept them fairly well fed. But they had told them frankly and gleefully why they did this. They wanted them to be strong enough to endure for a long time the tortures that would be meted out to them at the great festival that would attend the entry of the triumphant warriors into their village.

But however fiendish might be the motive, the

fact remained that the prisoners were fairly strong and well. Bomba was glad of this, as it would facilitate matters if a chance offered to make a break for liberty.

He told them in detail of his own adventures, not neglecting the way he had shamed Nascanora, at which they laughed gleefully. And he brought new courage to them by telling them that the Araos, with all the strength they could muster from other tribes, were following on their trail. At any time now they might appear in sight and deliver them.

While he was talking he looked up and saw two figures approaching him. They were downcast and abject and held their faces so low on their breasts that at first he did not recognize them. But as they drew nearer, he saw that they were Ashati and Neram.

"You here, too?" he said, as they squatted down beside him.

"Yes, master," Ashati answered for both, while Neram nodded his head despondently.

"I am sorry," said Bomba. "How did it come that you fell into the hands of Nascanora?"

"We were waiting for you near the bank of the river," replied Ashati, "when we heard the march of feet. We hid in the jungle, hoping that the enemy would go past and not see us. But they had with them the man you caught and who told



you the way to go to the island of Sobrinini. He led them to the place where you met him, and they beat the bushes till they found us."

"And that man told Nascanora that I had gone to the island, and that is why they came there for me!" exclaimed Bomba.

"We should have killed the man while we had him on the ground," stated Neram.

"No," said Bomba. "But it would have been well to have bound him and left him with you until after Nascanora had passed by. Yet the man swore by his gods that he would not tell."

"Nascanora has ways of making men speak," put in Ashati significantly.

"His heart is as black as Jojasta's was," declared Neram, as though that summed up the total of human depravity. "He will torture us with fire and steel and then place our heads on the wigwams of his people."

"I do not think so," said Bomba. "Sobrinini told me that I would get away from him. And Bomba will not leave his friends Ashati and Neram behind."

The news helped to dissipate the gloom on the countenances of the slaves.

"If Sobrinini said so, it must be true!" exclaimed Ashati, "for she is a witch."

"The greatest in all the jungle," confirmed Neram. "She is very wise. Her snakes whisper

in her ears and tell her what will be in the days to come."

They turned away much cheered and comforted, and just then their captors gave the signal for the march.

The prisoners were herded roughly together in the center of the marching columns, so that there could be no possible chance to escape. Fortunately, they had had a long rest while the war party under Nascanora had been making the raid on Snake Island, so they were in fairly good condition for the journey, and that the journey would not be a long one was now evident from the thunderous sound that grew ever louder and louder in their ears. They were approaching the Giant Cataract, where dwelt Nascanora and his people.

To the hapless prisoners, that sound was like the knell of doom.

The thunderous sound increased in volume, and suddenly at a turn in the trail, the most magnificent sight that Bomba had ever seen burst upon them.

They had reached the Giant Cataract!

## CHAPTER XXII

### RUSPAK GLOATS

FROM a great bluff, hundreds of feet in height, a huge torrent of water poured down into a gorge beneath and rose again in an ocean of spray. The sound was deafening. The mass of waters gleamed with all the colors of the rainbow. It was almost beyond the imagination of a dreamer.

It made Bomba catch his breath and stand entranced. For a few minutes he forgot that he was a prisoner, forgot the horrors that might await him. His soul drank in the beauty of this mighty cataract and its splendor. He had heard of its wonders, but had never dreamed it could be like this.

But there was little time to dwell on its grandeur and sublimity. The harsh voices of their guards drove the prisoners on. To the besotted minds of their captors the cataract was nothing, except that it signified that they were once more at home and now could revel in the torture of their victims.

The main village lay near the foot of the fall,

and from this now came pouring out the women and children and old men of the tribe.

There were shouts of delight as they saw the number of prisoners that their warriors had brought with them. They gathered about the captives, taunting and jeering at them and striking them with sticks until the guards intervened, not out of pity, but in order that the captives might be kept in good condition for the horrid festival that Nascanora was planning.

The prisoners passed through the streets of the village and their hearts sank, for they saw the human heads, shriveled and blackened by the sun, that were fastened on poles on the tops of the wigwams. They had evidently been there a long time. Now a new collection was in prospect.

In the center of the village was a rough stockade. Into this the prisoners were corralled and left under the supervision of guards, while the others of the band dispersed to their homes.

The captives sank down under a pall of horror. This, then, was the end of the trail. A day or two more, while their captors were preparing for the great festival of blood, and then torture and death.

The only calm and collected person in the whole enclosure was Bomba. Not that he was dwelling in a fool's paradise. He did not disguise from himself the awfulness of the situation. But he

faced it unflinchingly. His courage had never been at a higher pitch. His mind had never worked more clearly. He could die, and die bravely, if need be. But he meant to live.

He was making things as comfortable as he could for Casson and little Pirah when he heard his name spoken. He looked up quickly and saw before him Ruspak, the medicine man.

It was Ruspak that Bomba had once captured in the jungle and compelled to accompany him to the cabin where Casson lay at the point of death. Against his will, Ruspak had been forced to minister to the sick man, whom his native medicines finally brought back from the grave. When this had been done, Bomba had dismissed the medicine man with gifts and they had parted with professions of friendship.

But how insincere those professions had been on the part of Ruspak and how deeply he had resented the affront to his dignity as a medicine man was evident now by the malignity in his eyes and the gloating smile on his lips.

"So Bomba, the mighty Bomba, is a prisoner in the hands of Nascanora!" he jeered. "He finds now what happens to one who insults the messenger of the gods."

Bomba looked at him quietly, but made no answer.

"Where now is the white man's magic?" Ruspak sneered, as he looked mockingly at Casson. "Where is the puma that kept guard before the door?"

Still Bomba kept quiet, and looked at his tormentor with a contempt that stung Ruspak to the quick.

"So Bomba has lost his tongue," snapped the medicine man. "But Nascanora will find that tongue. He will pull it out with redhot pincers. Then he will cool Bomba's mouth with water. You came to the Giant Cataract. You see plenty water. Bomba shall have water. We will fill his body with it till he bursts."

Still Bomba disdained to answer.

"Bomba is strong," mocked Ruspak. "Very strong. That is good. He can stand torture for a long time before he dies. His eyes can be plucked out, and still he will live. He can be burned with torches in a hundred places and still he will live. His fingers can be cut off one by one, and still he will live. Death will seem very sweet to Bomba. He will pray for it, but it will be a long time before it comes. Nascanora will see to that."

But all his recital of the horrid tortures that were preparing for Bomba failed to elicit a single word from the contemptuous captive, and Ruspak at last left him and went away, mumbling to himself and licking his lips in anticipation.

Bomba turned to Casson and Hondura, who were seated near by. He hoped that they had not heard all that Ruspak had said. But the tears in the faded eyes of Casson showed that he had heard all too clearly and that his heart was wrung with anguish.

"Do not mind him," the lad soothed the old man, as he patted him on the shoulder. "He speaks big words, but they are like the wind in the trees. If my hands had not been bound, it would have been a bad thing for Ruspak."

"He has a black heart and a tongue that is as bitter as the aloe plant," said Hondura.

Bomba glanced around to see that none of the sentries were observing him.

"Hondura," he said, "slip your hand under the puma skin that covers my chest, reach up near my neck and tell me what you find."

Hondura did so, and drew back his hand quickly as it touched something hard and sharp.

"It is your machete," he whispered.

"Yes," replied Bomba in the same low tone. "I hung it there in a noose when I heard the head-hunters were coming. After they had bound my hands, they were in such a hurry to get away from the witch, Sobrinini, that they did not search me. They thought of it afterward, but when they looked for it in my belt it was gone, and they thought I had lost it or left it in Sobrinini's house.



But it is here, and it will be a good friend to Bomba."

Hondura's eyes lighted up as he grunted his satisfaction.

"It may yet find the heart of Nascanora," he said.

"Perhaps," assented Bomba. "But first the hands of Bomba must be free. When it is dark, Hondura will take the knife and cut the bonds of Bomba, not all the way, or the guards may notice, but so near through that Bomba can burst them when he wills."

"Hondura will do so," promised the Araos chief.

The tropic night soon fell and the darkness was made more intense than usual by the absence of moon or stars. A great storm was gathering. Claps of thunder deafened their ears and vivid lightning flashes shot across the sky.

Before long the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain came down in a deluge. It was a veritable cloudburst.

There was a shedlike structure in the stockade, used for storage of fodder for the cattle, and into this the prisoners huddled, finding some shelter from the fury of the elements.

For hours the torrential rain persisted. All that time Bomba's brain was at work thinking out plans of escape, rejecting one, seizing on another,

and weighing the chances of all. The case was desperate, but his spirit was indomitable.

Presently he noted a change in the sound of the cataract. The rains had swelled it tremendously, and its roar had increased. But it was not this that the jungle lad especially noted. It was a series of sharp reports, of splintering crashes, of jars that shook the earth, that caused him to listen in wonder.

Then he heard a loud screaming as of men and women in panic, a rushing of many feet and hoarse shouts that sent the guards scurrying from their posts in terror.

"The rocks of the falls are breaking! The cataract is coming down on the village! Run! Run! Run! Run!"

## CHAPTER XXIII

### A MAD STAMPEDE

BOMBA was on his feet instantly, his mind working with precision and rapidity.

He sensed in a moment the full meaning of the calamity and the advantages that he and the other captives might reap from it.

The enormous bulk of water that had swelled the volume of the cataract from the rain had broken the rocks that formed its brink. These had given way so that the course of the cataract had changed, and part of the water that had previously fallen into the gorge was now sweeping down on the doomed village.

In accordance with his promise, Hondura had severed the boy's bonds so that only a single strand was left. This he snapped like thread.

The guards had gone, forgetting all about the prisoners in the wild instinct of self-preservation. They had joined the rabble that were now rushing from their huts and through the passageways between, only intent for the moment on getting away

from the waters that threatened to overwhelm them.

Bomba called Hondura and Pipina to his side.

"The gods have been good to us," he cried. "We must go now and go quickly. They will not think of us until their fright is over. Hondura, get your people and lead them out. Pipina, take care of Casson. I will take Pirah—carry her if necessary—and go in front. Keep close to me."

In a twinkling his orders were carried out. The prisoners, stirred to new life by this unexpected chance of escape after all hope had been lost, responded to the call of their chief, hurried out of the stockade and mingled with the frantic, fleeing headhunters.

Not the slightest notice was taken of them by their captors. The night was very dark, and in their excitement it was impossible for the headhunters to distinguish friend from foe. All thought was lost save that of getting away from the doom that threatened them.

Bomba's marvelous sense of direction stood him in good stead. Dark as it was, he knew exactly the way he meant to go.

Luckily it was not the way in which the majority of the panic-stricken people had chosen. They were pressing toward the north. Bomba's plan was to go toward the south, retracing the path they had followed that afternoon.

This had a double advantage. With every step he would be widening the distance between the prisoners and their captors. If he could once win clear of the crowd, he and his companions would have a whole night's start in case of pursuit.

Then, too, he felt sure that by this time the people of Hondura's tribe, with what auxiliaries they could have mustered, had set out to rescue their chief. At any time now they might be met coming, and coming in such force that they would have a good chance for victory, if it came to a fight with the headhunters.

Bomba hurried on in the lead, protecting and shielding little Pirah in every way he could. Pipina and Casson were close behind, and the rest of the prisoners, led by Hondura, followed at their heels.

The party of captives had almost reached the end of the straggling village when a huge figure loomed up before them. He was hastening in a direction opposite to them, but not at such a headlong pace, as though he had a certain dignity to maintain which forbade too much yielding to fright.

Bomba could not see his face, but he knew that there was but one such towering figure in the tribe. It was Nascanora!

Bomba handed over Pirah to Hondura. Then he felt for his knife.

He still kept up his pace, hoping to pass the chief without being noticed. But there was something in his stride or form that aroused the chief's suspicions.

"Stop!" he commanded, barring the way and stooping down to peer into the boy's face.

Bomba had pulled out his knife from its hiding place by the blade. He had no time to grasp the hilt, but with all the power in his muscular arm he swung the heavy weapon, and the iron haft struck Nascanora right between the eyes. The giant chief went down as though he had been hit by an axe.

Like a flash, Bomba dragged him out of the road and threw him into the bushes at the side.

"Better make sure with the point of the knife," suggested Hondura.

"No," said Bomba, "I will not kill a man who cannot fight. He will not wake till morning, and then we shall be far from here."

His hopes were higher now as he pressed on. His one fear had been that Nascanora might rally his people and pursue his former prisoners. That fear now had vanished. Without their chief the headhunters would be confused and bewildered, and, not knowing what to do, would probably do nothing.

But now another enemy threatened. The waters of the cataract that had already wiped out

most of the village were expanding into the open country. Already it was lapping at the fugitives' heels, as though determined to draw them back and overwhelm them. It retarded their progress. Their feet stuck in the clammy ooze. The water kept rising higher and higher. It reached their ankles. It reached their knees. It seemed as though it were destined to conquer.

Then, just when it seemed that hope must be abandoned, an inspiring cry came from Bomba.

"The road is leading upward!" he shouted. "We are coming to a hill! The waters shall not have us!"

There was a jubilant chorus of shouts as the party struck the incline, and in a few minutes they were on ground above the swirling waters of the mighty river. The Giant Cataract had reached out for them, but they had eluded its grasp!

It was an exhausted but happy throng of refugees that sank down upon the slope as soon as they had reached a safe distance.

Their situation had changed as though by the waving of a magician's wand. Two hours before they had been helpless victims in the hands of the headhunters, doomed to torture and to death. Now their enemies were scattered, demoralized, fleeing for their lives from an enemy as pitiless as themselves.

The rain had ceased now, and the traveling



promised to be easier. Bomba gave them a little time to rest, and then the journey was resumed.

The lake that now extended between them and their enemies was another element in their favor. It would be some time before the waters would subside so as to make pursuit possible.

All through the night the little party pressed on, and not until the first glimmer of dawn appeared in the eastern sky did they stop to make camp and obtain a much needed rest on the banks of the River of Death.

While the Indians scurried around in the forest to find jaboty eggs, nuts, and fruit for the morning meal, Bomba climbed a great tree on the bank of the river to look back on the trail they had traversed.

From the top he could see for many miles. His keen eyes scanned the horizon, but could detect no traces of pursuers.

With his heart temporarily at rest, he was about to descend when he became conscious of a swaying, rocking motion of the tree. At the same moment a shout came from below:

"The tree is falling! Come down! Quick!"

## CHAPTER XXIV

### IN THE SWIRL OF THE RAPIDS

THE warning to Bomba came too late.

The tree had been undermined by the current, swelled by the recent rain. It had probably been tottering to its fall when Bomba climbed it, and his weight and his movements among the branches determined its fate.

Bomba was too high to jump. From such a distance he would surely have broken a limb and possibly his neck. He could only cling tightly to the bough on which he found himself and trust to chance.

Slowly the tree toppled, and then, with a tremendous splash, fell into the river. Its momentum carried it for a moment beneath the surface. Then it came up again with Bomba, drenched and sputtering, still holding tightly to the bough.

Fortunately he had been on the landward side of the tree, so that he was on the upper side as the tree swirled in the current.

Now, as his eyes cleared, he found that he was not alone. Ashati and Neram had been standing

at the foot of the tree, and as its great roots tore loose from the ground they caught the two ex-slaves and flung them with the force of a catapult far out into the stream.

They had made for the tree as the nearest haven of safety, and now climbed up into the branches and drew as near as they could to Bomba.

The lad's first impulse, when he found himself afloat, was to plunge into the river and swim for the bank, two hundred feet away. But even as the thought came into his mind he caught sight of the scaly body and horrid head of an alligator between him and the shore. The brute would have had him before he had gone twenty feet.

By this time the tree had been caught in the rapids, those terrible rapids of the River of Death whose power Bomba had already tested.

Had it been merely the trunk of a tree on which they found themselves, they would have been tossed off in a moment. But the great spreading branches kept it from turning over. Even at that, it was tossed about like a chip, and great waves broke over it, threatening at any moment to dislodge Bomba and his two companions, who had to hold on with all their might to prevent being swept away.

The horror of their position was intensified by the presence of a swarm of alligators, whose eyes

had detected them and looked upon them as certain prey. The monsters swam about the tree on every side, at times dashing up from underneath with wide open jaws, in the hope of reaching them and pulling them down.

Ashati and Neram thought that their last hour had come, and Bomba was inclined to agree with them. The tree might stay there, buffeted back and forth, for days. They could not guide it. They dared not leave it.

From the contemplation of his own plight, his thoughts turned to those on shore. He was thankful that they were safe for the moment. Hondura was there to lead them, and the wily chief knew all the lore and craft of the jungle. With the start he had over his enemies and the probability that he would soon fall in with his own warriors coming to his rescue, Hondura would probably win through.

And Bomba knew that the old chief and his people would take good care of Casson. Good old Casson! Would he ever see the old man again, the lad wondered.

But a different and more welcome turn was given to his thoughts when Bomba discovered that the fierce tossing had ceased. The tree had been thrown from the rapids into smoother water, and was now drifting in the grip of a strong current in the same direction that Bomba's canoe had taken two days before.

In a little while the point of land resembling a finger had been reached and passed, at so little distance that it would have been easy to swim to it, had it not been for the monster caymen that still kept pace with them.

Ashati and Neram had recovered their spirits, now that they had escaped the grip of the rapids.

"The Spirit of the Jungle is good!" exclaimed Ashati.

"It will not be long before we touch land somewhere," prophesied Neram, hopefully.

"Yes," said Bomba, as his eyes caught sight of Sobrinini's domain looming up before them, "and the land will be Snake Island."

At this name of ominous import a shudder ran through Bomba's companions.

"The island of the witch woman!" exclaimed Ashati, making cabalistic signs to ward off evil.

"The woman with the evil eye which brings death to everyone on whom it falls!" said Neram with a shiver.

"Listen!" said Bomba. "You talk like foolish men. Is Bomba dead? Yet Sobrinini's look fell upon Bomba. She is a wise woman. Did she not say that I would come back to Snake Island? And is Bomba not going back? I do not like her snakes. But she has done no evil to Bomba, and she will do no hurt to Bomba's friends. And Ashati and Neram are my friends."

The boy's words brought some reassurance to his companions, but not enough to banish their fears wholly, and it was with great trepidation that they viewed the dreaded island as the tree drew ever nearer.

As for Bomba himself, he was almost glad at the accident which had at the time seemed so disastrous. He would not of his own accord have taken the time just now to visit Sobrinini again, eager as he was to renew his questioning. She had been on the very point of telling him what he wanted to know when Nascanora and his braves had broken in upon them. Perhaps this time he would be more fortunate.

He was immersed in these thoughts when to their ears came a wailing cry, so weird, so uncanny, so long drawn out, that it chilled their blood.

It came from the direction of the island, but, strain their eyes as they might, they could detect no human figure from whom the cry might have issued.

The sound was the signal for another outbreak of fear on the part of the ex-slaves. They were brave enough when facing human or animal foes, as they had shown in their combat with the jaguars, but when brought in contact with what they regarded as supernatural, their hearts melted within them.

They whimpered and cowered and glanced at

the water, as though they were almost willing to take their chances with the alligators rather than approach the island they deemed accursed.

But they had drawn nearer now and they could detect an agitated, tumultuous group of figures on the shore.

The wailing cry came again, so near this time that Ashati and Neram nearly lost their grip on the boughs.

Then from out the fringe of trees that lined the shore shot a small canoe, paddled with frantic energy by a withered old woman, her straggling locks streaming behind her head, her face convulsed with fear.

"Sobrinini!" cried Bomba



## CHAPTER XXV

### THE RESCUE OF SOBRININI

WITH Bomba, to think was to act.

In a moment he had made his way out on the bough to a point where the foliage thinned out and there was a chance of his being seen.

"Sobrinini! Sobrinini!" he shouted at the top of his voice.

At the call, the old crone ceased paddling for a moment and turned her haggard face in the direction of the tree.

"Who calls?" she cried shrilly. "Who is it that calls Sobrinini?"

"It is Bomba!" shouted the lad, at the same time shaking the bough of the tree violently to attract her attention.

She caught the movement of the foliage, and, peering closely, saw the outline of Bomba's face and form.

"Bartow!" she cried. "Or is it Bartow's ghost? You have come to see Sobrinini die."

"No!" replied Bomba. "I have come to help Sobrinini live. Come quickly!"

This last admonition was prompted by the sight of another boat containing several natives of the island putting out from the shore. He sensed at once that their errand was hostile.

Sobrinini saw them too, and with a few strokes of her paddle brought the canoe directly beneath the jungle boy.

Bomba dropped lightly into the canoe, and then held it steady until Ashati and Neram had time to follow his example.

The other boat was coming on rapidly now, and time was pressing. Bomba took the paddle from Sobrinini's hands and pressed her gently to the bottom of the boat.

But before he dipped the paddle into the water he drew his knife and shook it menacingly at the approaching natives.

"Go back or you will die!" he shouted. "This is the knife that frightened Nascanora. It made his heart like that of a woman. Who are you to stand before it when even the chief of the head-hunters was afraid?"

It was a wholesome reminder, and it had an immediate effect. They recognized Bomba now as the jungle boy whose challenge Nascanora had been afraid to accept. That scene had made an indelible impression upon their minds. They stopped paddling, and excited jabbering ensued.

Bomba faced them for a full minute. Then

with a disdainful gesture he replaced the knife in his belt, as though they were foes too insignificant to bother with any further, took up the paddle, and without once looking behind him made for the opposite shore.

His evident fearlessness and contempt decided the issue. The pursuing party, after a little irresolution, gave up the chase and turned the prow of their boat in the direction of Snake Island.

Sobrinini had said nothing coherent since her rescue, but sat crouched on the bottom of the boat mumbling to herself, her long, disheveled hair shielding her face. Bomba regarded her curiously from time to time, half expecting to see one or more snakes make their appearance. But it soon became apparent that all her horrid "pets" had been left behind in her hurried flight.

Ashati and Neram kept as far away from her as they could, crowding against each other to avoid contact with the "witch" whose name spread terror through all that region.

Why had she fled from the island where she had so long held sway? Why had her formerly submissive slaves turned against her? Bomba longed to question her, but had to defer that to another time. He wished that she had brought with her that picture, the picture of that sweet, beautiful woman, whose eyes had looked so fondly into his.

After a long siege of paddling, the boat touched

the farther shore. Bomba jumped out and pulled the canoe far up on the shelving bank. Then he helped Sobrinini out, while Ashati and Neram leaped ashore quickly, glad to be freed from their enforced proximity to the witch.

At Bomba's command, the men scattered to gather a little food from the forest, and soon returned with nuts and berries that partially satisfied their hunger.

Bidding them stay where they were, Bomba penetrated some distance into the jungle to see if he could pick up the trail of Hondura and his party.

He had not gone far before he began to sniff. He smelled smoke. His eyes followed the indications of his nostrils, and he finally caught sight of a shred of smoke rising above trees not far distant.

He was about to drop on his hands and knees and creep through the brush to reconnoiter, when he heard a sound that made his heart leap with delight.

It came to him faintly, and yet was unmistakable. Somebody was playing a harmonica!

Reassured now, but still not abandoning his habitual caution, he moved forward until from the shelter of a bush he could see encamped in a clearing, while they prepared their midday meal, a large party of natives, evidently on the warpath, as they were armed to the teeth.

He knew them at once. They were the Araos coming to the rescue of their chief. There was Lodo, evidently in command, a little apart from the rest. And there was Grico, squatting on his haunches and bringing weird sounds from Bomba's harmonica for the delectation of his mates.

Bomba stepped from the shelter of the bush, his hands upraised with palms outward in sign of friendship.

There was a chorus of ejaculations, a hurried grasping of weapons, and then shouts of pleasure as they recognized the newcomer.

They crowded about him with every manifestation of delight, overwhelming him with questions. And cries of joy went up as Bomba, in as few words as possible, told them what had happened and that Hondura with the ex-captives must be close at hand and coming to meet them.

Instantly their meal was forgotten as they gathered up their weapons and supplies and prepared to go forward to greet their chief, their women, and their children.

Grico, the man with the one eye and the split nose, had listened to Bomba's story with such absorbed interest that he still held the harmonica loosely in his hand. Bomba reached out coolly and took it from him.

Grico looked astonished and sheepish. And he

was still more abashed when Bomba, noting a protuberance in Grico's pouch, reached in and drew out the precious revolver.

"It was good of Grico to keep these for Bomba till he should come back again," said the boy in the friendliest of tones, as he stowed away the treasures in his pouch.

His look was so kindly, so innocent, that Grico did not know what to do or say. Ordinarily this would have meant a fight. But Grico knew that Bomba was a bad opponent to pick for a fight, and, besides, at this moment, the boy was high in the favor of the tribe.

And Bomba's eyes were very compelling, despite their friendliness. Grico had never heard of an iron hand in a velvet glove, but he felt that something of that kind was very close by.

So he swallowed hard for a moment, and then took advantage of the opening that Bomba had given him.

"Y—yes," he stammered. "Grico found them in the jungle and kept them for Bomba."

"Grico did well, and Bomba will not forget," said the lad gravely.

It was arranged hastily that Bomba should go back and get his companions and then join the war party as they went forward to meet their chief.

Ashati and Neram greeted Bomba's news with cries of delight. Sobrinini showed no emotion

whatever. It was doubtful whether she understood. She was sunk in a state of apathy, the natural reaction from her exciting experiences.

It was difficult to get her to her feet at all, but the need was urgent and Bomba put his strong arm under hers, and with Ashati and Neram made as good time as possible in the direction of the line of march.

Luckily, their journey was not prolonged, for before an hour had passed a joyous hubbub not far ahead told them that the two parties had joined forces. Hondura and the ex-prisoners were once more with their own people.

Bomba was welcomed with wild acclaim when he came into view. Casson and Pipina especially greeted him with tears and embraces that testified how deeply they were moved.

There was a great feast to celebrate the reunion, followed by a long powwow between Hondura, Grico and Lodo. Bomba was invited to join the conference, but declined, as he felt this was a matter that concerned them chiefly and he did not want to take any responsibility for the future movements of the tribe.

The result of the powwow was that the natives formed themselves into two bands. One, consisting of picked warriors under the leadership of Lodo, with Grico as his lieutenant, proceeded toward the Giant Cataract to give battle to the



headhunters and remove forever, if possible, that menace to the peaceful tribes of the region.

Others, under the guidance of the aged chief, Hondura, convoyed the rescued women and children in the direction of their maloca, which they planned to rebuild.

The grateful Hondura detailed eight of his men to make two litters on which they bore Casson and Sobrinini, who had reached the limit of their strength, to the cabin of Pipina.

When their paths at last diverged, Hondura and Bomba clasped each other by the shoulders and vowed eternal friendship. Pirah wept bitterly at the separation, and could only be comforted by Bomba's promise to come to see her before long.

Bomba had cherished a vague hope that something dramatic would take place when Casson and Sobrinini were brought face to face. He hoped the meeting would unlock the floodgates of memories which they shared in common.

But to his bitter disappointment nothing of the kind occurred. Age had changed each so utterly that neither recognized the other. They looked at each other indifferently, and then their eyes turned away.

He had not named either one to the other as yet, and both were so apathetic that they showed no curiosity. But though disheartened, Bomba

did not wholly despair. When they should get to the cabin of Pipina he would try again.

Ashati and Neram had begged to be allowed to go along with Bomba, and he had willingly agreed. The faithful fellows were devoted to him heart and soul, and they might be of great service to him whenever he should be compelled to absent himself from the cabin.

Shred by shred, in monosyllables and muttered exclamations, Bomba gathered, as he walked beside Sobrinini's litter, the reason for her flight from the island. He had already guessed it pretty accurately.

Her harsh rule had for a long time galled the natives, who sought an excuse for rebellion. That excuse had been found in the visit of Nascanora. They had expected that she would annihilate him on the spot. Was she not a witch? But when, on the contrary, Nascanora had triumphed and taken her guest from under her protection, their belief in her supernatural powers failed, their long-smothered resentment broke forth, and she had been compelled to flee for her life.

The little party reached the cabin of Pipina without any untoward happening, the braves departed for their maloca, and the little household, now increased by three, was reestablished.

Bomba waited till several days had elapsed and

his aged charges had become rested and strengthened after their exhausting experiences before he broached the subject that was nearest his heart.

Then, one evening after supper, he turned to them as they were sitting dreamily in the large room of the little cabin.

"Casson!" he said. "Sobrinini! Look upon each other and tell me what you see."

They started at his sharp command, and gazed bewilderedly at him, then at each other.

At first there was no recognition, but as they gazed fixedly a dawning wonderment came into their eyes.

Casson was the first to speak.

"Sobrinini!" he cried. "No, that is not Sobrinini. Sobrinini was beautiful. Sobrinini could sing. And yet—and yet——"

"Casson!" exclaimed Sobrinini in her turn. "It cannot be Casson. He was young and strong, and his hair was like that of the raven. But I am Sobrinini. I can sing. Listen!"

She sprang to her feet and sang in her cracked voice the song that Bomba had heard in the language he did not understand. As she sang, Casson began to beat his withered palms together in applause, and finally got to his feet and started to dance about the room.

It was weird and uncanny, and Bomba looked on, fascinated yet horrified, until the song ended,

the dance stopped, and the aged participants sank trembling in their chairs.

"You do know each other!" cried Bomba. "And you know about my father and my mother. Tell me, oh, tell me who they were, where they are! Tell me!"

They looked at him, trying to gather their poor scattered wits. Casson rubbed his forehead with his hand.

"Ask Jojasta," he muttered. "I cannot remember. The door is closed. But Jojasta knows. Ask him."

"But Jojasta is dead!" exclaimed Bomba.

"Oh, yes," replied Casson. "You told me he was dead. Then ask Sobrinini. Nini will know."

In desperation, Bomba turned to the woman.

"You tell me," he begged. "You were going to tell me when Nascanora came. Tell me now!"

"I forget—I forget," murmured Sobrinini. "I cannot tell you, Bartow."

"I am not Bartow," said Bomba.

"Then you are his ghost," muttered the crone.

"No, no!" cried Bomba. "Look at me. Try to remember."

She stared at him long and hard.

"If you are not Bartow nor Bartow's ghost, you are his son," she declared. "Andrew Bartow and Laura—yes, her name was Laura—had a son who was named Bonny. She used to sing to him

like this—" and again she crooned the tender cradle song that had stirred Bomba so strangely.

She relapsed into meditation, still humming that haunting song.

"Yes," prompted Bomba eagerly. "Where are Bartow and Laura now? And Bonny——"

"Bonny!" she repeated. "Oh, yes, Bonny was stolen. He was stolen from home by—by—Japazy! That was his name—a half-breed. Japazy hated Bartow and hated Casson, too. I do not know why he hated them. And then—and then—oh, I cannot remember! But ask Japazy—he will know. Look for Japazy on Jaguar Island above the cataract."

Her voice died away in disjointed mutterings, and from neither her nor Casson could he get anything clearer that evening nor in the days that followed.

The boy was desperate. It seemed that the half-demented man and woman could get no further. Bomba had got merely a clue.

But that in itself was something. How Bomba followed it up and what exciting perils and adventures he met in fulfilling his task will be told in the next volume of this series, entitled: "Bomba the Jungle Boy on Jaguar Island; or, Adrift on the River of Mystery."

From the pain and disappointment in his heart Bomba sought relief with his wild friends of the

forest. They could always sympathize with his mood and in some degree understand it. To them he talked, and they chattered in reply. And his sore heart was eased in their companionship.

One day, when he had been playing his harmonica and Doto, the monkey, and Kiki and Woo-woo, the parrots, and others of their mates were gathered around him, there was a crashing in the bushes, and faithful Polulu, the giant puma, bounded into the clearing.

The others scattered like magic as the formidable beast came up to Bomba, purring and rubbing his head against him.

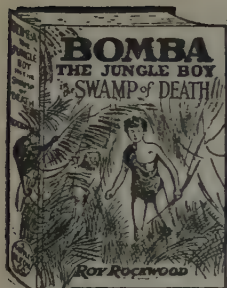
"Good old Polulu!" exclaimed Bomba, as he caressed the great head affectionately. "He is one of Bomba's best friends. Bomba is glad to see him. But Bomba cannot stay with Polulu long. He is going on a long journey. For Bomba's place is not here. He is not a native of the jungle. He has a soul. He is white. Yes, Bomba is white. And Bomba's soul cannot be at rest until he dwells among the white people."

**THE END**



# THE BOMBA BOOKS

By ROY ROCKWOOD



12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. With Colored jacket.

Price 50 cents per volume. Postage 10 cents additional.

*Bomba lived far back in the jungles of the Amazon with a half-demented naturalist who told the lad nothing of his past. The jungle boy was a lover of birds, and hunted animals with a bow and arrow and his trusty machete. He had only a primitive education, and his daring adventures will be followed with breathless interest by thousands.*

1. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY
2. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AT THE MOVING MOUNTAIN
3. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AT THE GIANT CATARACT
4. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY ON JAGUAR ISLAND
5. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY IN THE ABANDONED CITY
6. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY ON TERROR TRAIL
7. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY IN THE SWAMP OF DEATH
8. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AMONG THE SLAVES
9. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY ON THE UNDERGROUND RIVER
10. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AND THE LOST EXPLORERS
11. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY IN A STRANGE LAND
12. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AMONG THE PYGMIES
13. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AND THE CANNIBALS
14. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AND THE PAINTED HUNTERS
15. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AND THE RIVER DEMONS
16. BOMBA THE JUNGLE BOY AND THE HOSTILE CHIEFTAIN

These books may be purchased wherever books are sold

*Send for Our Free Illustrated Catalogue*

---

---

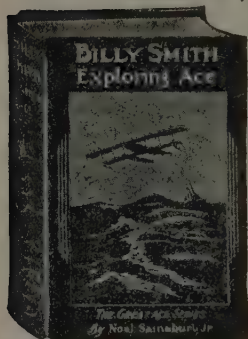
CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers      New York



# THE GREAT ACE SERIES

By NOËL SAINSBURY, JR.

Author of THE CHAMPION SPORT STORIES



12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. Jacket in colors.  
Price 50 cents per volume. Postage 10  
cents additional.

Here is a series of rattling good flying stories told by an expert. A boy-aviator's adventures in the wilds of New Guinea, Arabia, South America and other strange lands. Billy Smith, son of an eminent explorer, learns to pilot a seaplane aboard a Naval Air Station, and immediately fares forth upon a series of the most exciting cruises and mysterious quests by air, by land and by sea that have ever fallen to the lot of man. The author, a traveller and ex-naval aviator, brings many of his own adventures into these tales. Every boy with a drop of red blood in his veins will want to join Billy Smith in his thrilling quests.

## 1. BILLY SMITH—EXPLORING ACE

*or By Airplane to New Guinea*

The story of a fourteen-year-old lad, taught to pilot a seaplane by his uncle, Lieut.-Commander on a Naval Air Station. Together they are forced down at sea, and Lieut.-Com. Smith is so impressed with the lad's courage in this trying situation that he takes Billy with him to New Guinea to help search for Billy's father.

## 2. BILLY SMITH—SECRET SERVICE ACE

*or Airplane Adventures in Arabia*

Billy Smith again proves his mettle in a series of adventures that take him to Port Sudan on the Red Sea and the Holy City of Hejaz.

## 3. BILLY SMITH—MYSTERY ACE

*or Airplane Discoveries in South America*

Doctor Stanton, bird man of the Natural History Museum disappeared in the Amazon Jungles. The Smiths, father and son are ordered to find him, and the trail leads to an outpost rubber plantation, where Billy is lost in the jungle and captured by the cannibal Mangeroma Indians.

## 4. BILLY SMITH—TRAIL EATER ACE

*or Into the Wilds of Northern Alaska*

Another exciting story. Billy Smith and his pal, Nuky, with the aid of Billy's father set a trap to catch desperate gangsters which they succeed in doing after many thrilling adventures.

## 5. BILLY SMITH—SHANGHAIED ACE

*or Malay Pirates and Solomon Island Cannibals*

Billy shanghaied while on a search for a missing steamer and one passenger in particular, escapes in time to be of vast help, after all, and bring off a famous rescue in the South Sea Islands.

These books may be purchased wherever books are sold  
*Send for Our Free Illustrated Catalogue*

---

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers

New York

# MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE BOOKS FOR BOYS



*12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. Colored jackets.*

*Price 50 cents per volume.*

*Postage 10 cents additional.*

## **SOUTH FROM HUDSON BAY,** by E. C. BRILL

A thrilling tale of the coming of settlers from France and Switzerland to the wilderness of the Prairie country of the Red River district, and the adventures of three boys who find themselves entangled in the fate of the little colony.

## **THE SECRET CACHE,** by E. C. BRILL

The father of two boys, a fur hunter, has been seriously injured by an Indian. Before he dies he succeeds in telling the younger son about a secret cache of valuable furs. The directions are incomplete but the boys start off to find the Cache, and with the help of men from a nearby settlement capture the Indian and bring him to justice.

## **THE ISLAND OF YELLOW SANDS,** by E. C. BRILL

An exciting story of Adventure in Colonial Days in the primitive country around Lake Superior, when the forest and waters were the hunting ground of Indians, hunters and trappers.

## **LOST CITY OF THE AZTECS,** by J. A. LATH

Four chums find a secret code stuck inside the binding of an old book written many years ago by a famous geologist. The boys finally solve the code and learn of the existence of the remnant of a civilized Aztec tribe inside an extinct crater in the southern part of Arizona. How they find these Aztecs, and their many stirring adventures makes a story of tremendous present-day scientific interest that every boy will enjoy.

These books may be purchased wherever books are sold  
*Send for Our Free Illustrated Catalogue*

---

---

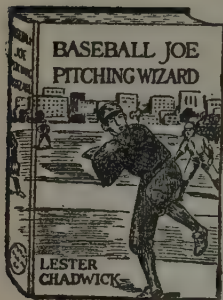
**CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers**      **New York**

# THE BASEBALL JOE SERIES

By LESTER CHADWICK

12mo. Illustrated. Price 50 cents per volume.

Postage 10 cents additional.



1. **BASEBALL JOE OF THE SILVER STARS**  
*or The Rivals of Riverside*
2. **BASEBALL JOE ON THE SCHOOL NINE**  
*or Pitching for the Blue Banner*
3. **BASEBALL JOE AT YALE**  
*or Pitching for the College Championship*
4. **BASEBALL JOE IN THE CENTRAL LEAGUE**  
*or Making Good as a Professional Pitcher*
5. **BASEBALL JOE IN THE BIG LEAGUE**  
*or A Young Pitcher's Hardest Struggles*
6. **BASEBALL JOE ON THE GIANTS**  
*or Making Good as a Twirler in the Metropolis*
7. **BASEBALL JOE IN THE WORLD SERIES**  
*or Pitching for the Championship*
8. **BASEBALL JOE AROUND THE WORLD**  
*or Pitching on a Grand Tour*
9. **BASEBALL JOE: HOME RUN KING**  
*or The Greatest Pitcher and Batter on Record*
10. **BASEBALL JOE SAVING THE LEAGUE**  
*or Breaking Up a Great Conspiracy*
11. **BASEBALL JOE CAPTAIN OF THE TEAM**  
*or Bitter Struggles on the Diamond*
12. **BASEBALL JOE CHAMPION OF THE LEAGUE**  
*or The Record that was Worth While*
13. **BASEBALL JOE CLUB OWNER**  
*or Putting the Home Town on the Map*
14. **BASEBALL JOE PITCHING WIZARD**  
*or Triumphs Off and On the Diamond*

*Send for Our Free Illustrated Catalogue.*

---

**CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers**      **New York**

# ADVENTURE STORIES FOR BOYS

By JOHN GABRIEL ROWE



12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. Colored Jacket.

Price 50 cents per volume.

Postage 10 cents additional.

*Every boy who knows the lure of exploring and who loves to rig up huts and caves and tree-houses to fortify himself against imaginary enemies will enjoy these books, for they give a vivid chronicle of the doings and inventions of a group of boys who are shipwrecked and have to make themselves snug and safe in tropical islands where the dangers are too real for play.*

## 1. CRUSOE ISLAND

Dick, Alf and Fred find themselves stranded on an unknown island with the old seaman Josh, their ship destroyed by fire, their friends lost.

## 2. THE ISLAND TREASURE

With much ingenuity these boys fit themselves into the wild life of the island they are cast upon after a storm.

## 3. THE MYSTERY OF THE DERELICT

Their ship and companions perished in tempest at sea, the boys are adrift in a small open boat when they spy a ship. Such a strange vessel!—no hand guiding it, no soul on board,—a derelict.

## 4. THE LIGHTSHIP PIRATES

Modern Pirates, with the ferocity of beasts, attack a lightship crew;—recounting the adventures that befall the survivors of that crew—and—"RETRIBUTION."

## 5. THE SECRET OF THE GOLDEN IDOL

Telling of a mutiny, and how two youngsters were unwillingly involved in one of the weirdest of treasure hunts,—and—"THE GOLDEN FETISH."

## 6. SERGEANT DICK

The Canadian Northwest police has the reputation of always getting their man, and Sergeant Dick upholds the tradition in a story of great adventure.

## 7. THE CARCAJOU (kārcájōu)

A sequel to Sergeant Dick, with the Carcajou proving his worth in a series of adventures that will hold the interest of any boy.

These books may be purchased wherever books are sold

*Send for Our Free Illustrated Catalogue*

---

---

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers

New York



# CHAMPION SPORTS STORIES

By NOEL SAINSBURY, JR.

*Every boy enjoys sport stories. Here we present three crackerjack stories of baseball, football, and basketball, written in the vernacular of the boy of to-day, full of action, suspense and thrills, in language every boy will understand, and which we know will be enthusiastically endorsed by all boys.*

*Large 12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. Jacket in color. Price 50 cents per volume.*

*Postage 10 cents additional.*

## 1. CRACKER STANTON

*Or The Making of a Batsman*

Ralph Stanton, big, rawboned and serious, is a product of the backwoods and a crack rifle shot. Quick thinking and pluck bring him a scholarship to Clarkville School where he is branded "grind" and "dub" by classmates. How his batting brings them first place in the League and how he secures his appointment to West Point make CRACKER STANTON an up-to-the-minute baseball story no lover of the game will want to put down until the last word is read.

## 2. GRIDIRON GRIT

*Or The Making of a Fullback*

A corking story of football packed full of exciting action and good, clean competitive rivalry. Shorty Fiske is six-foot-four and the product of too much money and indulgence at home. How Clarkville School and football develop Shorty's real character and how he eventually stars on the gridiron brings this thrilling tale of school life and football to a grandstand finish.

## 3. THE FIGHTING FIVE

*Or the Kidnapping of Clarkville's Basketball Team*

Clarkville School's basketball team is kidnapped during the game for the State Scholastic Championship. The team's subsequent adventures under the leadership of Captain Charlie Minor as he brings them back to the State College Gymnasium where the two last quarters of the Championship game are played next evening, climaxes twenty-four pulsating hours of adventure and basketball in the FIGHTING FIVE. . . .

---

**CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers      New York**



# SORAK JUNGLE SERIES

By HARVEY D. RICHARDS



*The name Sorak means War Cry in the Malay country. He grows up among the most primitive of the Malay aborigines, and learns to combat all the terrors of the jungle with safety. The constant battle with nature's forces develop Sorak's abilities to such an extent that he is acknowledged the chief warrior in all his section of the jungle.*

*12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. Jacket in color. Price 50 cents per volume.*

*Postage 10 cents additional.*

## 1. SORAK OF THE MALAY JUNGLE

*or How Two Young Americans Face Death and Win a Friend*

Two boys, Dick and Jack Preston are shipwrecked off the Malay Peninsula and are rescued by Sorak. Their adventures in trying to get back to civilization make an absorbing story.

## 2. SORAK AND THE CLOUDED TIGER

*or How the Terrible Ruler of the North Is Hunted and Destroyed*

A huge clouded tiger, almost human, leads a pack of red dholes into Sorak's country, and it takes all of Sorak's ingenuity, and the aid of his friends to exterminate the pack.

## 3. SORAK AND THE SULTAN'S ANKUS

*or How a Perilous Journey Leads to a Kingdom of Giants*

Sorak and his friends are trapped by a herd of elephants, and finally run away with by the leader to an unknown valley where a remnant of Cro-Magnan race still exists. Their exciting adventures will hold the reader enthralled until the last word.

## 4. SORAK AND THE TREE-MEN

*or the Rescue of the Prisoner Queen*

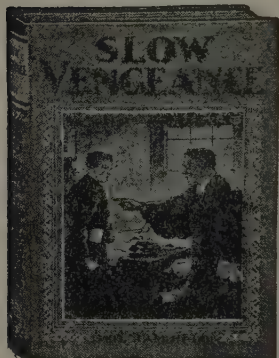
Captured by a band of Malay slavers, Sorak and his friends are wrecked on an island off the coast of Burma in the Mergui Archipelago. Their escape from the island with the Prisoner Queen after a successful revolution brings the fourth book of this series to an exciting and unusual conclusion.

---

---

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers New York

# TOP NOTCH DETECTIVE STORIES



By WILLIAM HALL

*Each story complete in itself*

*A new group of detective stories carefully written, with corking plots; modern, exciting, full of adventure, good police and detective work.*

*Large 12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. Jacket in color. Price 50 cents per volume.*

*Postage 10 cents additional.*

## 1. SLOW VENGEANCE

*or the Mystery of Pete Shine*

A young newspaper man, whose brother is on the police force, becomes strangely involved in the mysterious killing of an Italian bootblack. Suspicion points to a well-known politician but he proves that it was impossible for him to have done the deed. Then the reporter, who for a time turns detective, gets a clue revolving about a startling, ancient method of combat. He follows this up, watches a masked duelist and, with the help of a girl, catches the murderer who justifies his deed on the plea of *Slow Vengeance*. You will be interested in reading how the reporter got out of a tight corner.

## 2. GREEN FIRE

*or Mystery of the Indian Diamond*

A golf caddy who has a leaning toward amateur detective work, together with his younger cousin, are accidentally mixed up in the strange loss, or theft, of a valuable diamond, known as *Green Fire*. It was once the eye of an East Indian idol. To clear his young cousin of suspicion, the older boy undertakes to solve the mystery which deepens when one man disappears and another is found murdered on the golf course. But, by a series of clever moves on the part of the young sleuth, the crime is solved and the diamond found in a most unusual hiding place. A rapidly moving, exciting tale. You will like it.

## 3. HIDDEN DANGER

*or The Secret of the Bank Vault*

A young detective, who, in his private capacity, has solved several mysteries, decides to open an office in another city. He meets a young bank clerk and they become partners just when the clerk's bank is mysteriously bombed and the cashier is reported missing. It is not until next day that it is discovered that the bank vault has been entered in some secret manner and a large sum stolen. The regular detectives declared "spirits" must have robbed the bank but the two young detectives prove that a clever gang did it and also kidnapped the aged cashier. Not a dull page from first to last. A clever story.

---

---

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers      New York









## TO PARENTS

*Our Name is a Reliable Guide  
to Good Books*

**Y**OU want to be sure of the character of the books read by your boys and girls. When you see our name, Cupples & Leon Company, printed on a book, you can rest assured that it is a fit book for them in every way, that the reading matter is clean, interesting, inspiring and educational.

*Send for our complete  
free illustrated Catalogue*

**CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY**

Publishers :: :: :: New York

[See Inner Side of this Wrapper]





# THE BOB DEXTER SERIES

By WILLARD F. BAKER

Author of "THE BOY RANCHERS SERIES"



12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. 50 cents per volume. Postage and colors. Price of colors additional.

This is a new line of stories for boys, by the author of the Boy Ranchers series. The Bob Dexter books are detective stories, yet they are without the objectionable features of the impossible characters and absurd situations that mark so many of the books in that class. These stories deal with the up-to-date adventures of a normal, healthy lad who has a great desire to solve mysteries, and the volumes relate in an entertaining way how he does it.

## 1. BOB DEXTER AND THE CLUB-HOUSE MYSTERY

*or The Missing Golden Eagle*

This story tells how the Boys' Athletic Club was despoiled of its trophies in a strange manner, and how, among other things stolen, was the Golden Eagle mascot.

## 2. BOB DEXTER AND THE BEACON BEACH MYSTERY

*or The Wreck of the Sea Hawk*

Bob and his chum went to Beacon Beach for their vacation, they were plunged into a strange series of events, not the least of which was the sinking of the Sea Hawk.

## 3. BOB DEXTER AND THE STORM MOUNTAIN MYSTERY

*or The Secret of the Log Cabin*

Bob Dexter came upon a man mysteriously injured and befriended him, which led Bob into the midst of a series of strange events.

## 4. BOB DEXTER AND THE AEROPLANE MYSTERY

*or The Secret of the Jint San*

Bob and his chums witness the mysterious disappearance of an aeroplane and find excitement in their exploration of an unknown cave.

## 5. BOB DEXTER AND THE SEAPLANE MYSTERY

*or The Secret of the White Stones*

Bob Dexter, while on a vacation, captures a band of criminals, and solves a mystery in which millions of dollars in gems and jewelry had been stolen.

## 6. BOB DEXTER AND THE RED AUTO MYSTERY

*The Secret of the Flying Car*

A story of a mysterious red auto is packed with many hair-raising adventures. Bob comes to the rescue and captures the criminals.

## 7. BOB DEXTER AND THE RADIO MYSTERY

*or The Secret of the Counterfeiters*

When Bob and his chums resolve to clear up a baffling mystery they do it with many narrow escapes.

These books may be purchased wherever books are sold

Send for Our Free Illustration

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers New York